



VANDERBILT
Student Health Center

Self-Care for Gastroenteritis (Stomach Bug)

- The most common causes of nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea are viral infections. Symptoms may also include crampy abdominal pain
- Viral illnesses are typically self-limiting. Most people start to improve within 24 hours and feel back to normal within 72 hours of onset of illness.
- Most stomach bugs can be treated at home and do not require a visit to a healthcare facility
- If you have a stomach bug, you should perform an at-home COVID test or see a medical provider for testing. If you test positive for COVID, follow the latest CDC isolation guidelines

Self-care:

- Rest
- Consume clear liquids such as water, ice chips, clear broth, popsicles, and electrolyte replacement drinks such as Gatorade, Powerade or Pedialyte
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and carbonated beverages
- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) 650 mg every 6 hours as needed for fever, chills, headache, and body aches

Recovery:

- If vomiting and/or diarrhea has resolved, you may start bland solid foods (crackers, toast, rice etc.)
- If you can tolerate bland solid foods for 12- 24 hours, add other foods as tolerated. Dairy, fried foods and highly seasoned foods should be added last

Prevention of spread of illness to others

- Wash hands with soap and water frequently
- If you have a roommate, use bleach cleaners in shared areas
- Limit social contact with others while you are symptomatic

When to seek medical care

- If you see blood in stool or vomit
- Vomiting more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea has not improved in 72 hours
- Abdominal pain is severe
- Experiencing signs of dehydration such as dry mouth, no urination for 8 hours, dark/concentrated urine, dizziness/lightheadedness when standing or walking
- Persistent fever