



GASTROENTERITIS EPIDEMIC, FOOD-BORNE ILLNESS

WHAT IS GASTROENTERITIS?

GASTROENTERITIS IS INFLAMMATION OF THE STOMACH AND SMALL AND LARGE INTESTINES. IT IS OFTEN CALLED THE "STOMACH FLU", ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CAUSED BY THE INFLUENZA VIRUSES.

WHAT CAUSES GASTROENTERITIS?

MANY DIFFERENT VIRUSES CAN CAUSE GASTROENTERITIS, INCLUDING ROTAVIRUSES, NOROVIRUSES, ADENOVIRUSES, SAPOVIRUSES, AND ASTROVIRUSES. VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS IS NOT CAUSED BY BACTERIA, PARASITES, OR MEDICATIONS.

HOW IS GASTROENTERITIS SPREAD?

PEOPLE CAN BECOME INFECTED BY EATING OR DRINKING INFECTED FOOD OR DRINKS, OR BY TOUCHING INFECTED SURFACES AND THEN TOUCHING THEIR MOUTH. IT IS ALSO SPREAD THROUGH CLOSE CONTACT WITH INFECTED PERSONS BY SHARING FOOD, WATER, OR EATING UTENSILS.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS GASTROENTERITIS?

THE MAIN SYMPTOMS OF VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS ARE WATERY DIARRHEA AND VOMITING. HEADACHE, FEVER, AND STOMACH ACHE ALSO MAY APPEAR.

HOW SOON DO SYMPTOMS APPEAR?

IN GENERAL, THE SYMPTOMS BEGIN 1 TO 2 DAYS FOLLOWING INFECTION, AND MAY LAST FOR 1 TO 10 DAYS DEPENDING ON WHICH VIRUS CAUSES THE ILLNESS.

HOW IS GASTROENTERITIS TREATED?

THERE IS NO CURE AND ALMOST ALL PEOPLE WHO GET VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS GET BETTER WITHOUT ANY LONG-TERM PROBLEMS. THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO DO FOR PEOPLE WITH THE ILLNESS IS TO STAY HYDRATED AND DRINK LOTS OF FLUIDS. MEDICATIONS ARE USUALLY NOT GIVEN. PEOPLE WHO WORK WITH FOOD, CHILDREN IN DAYCARE AND HEALTH CARE WORKERS MUST GET THE APPROVAL OF THE LOCAL OR STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT BEFORE RETURNING TO THEIR JOBS.

HOW IS GASTROENTERITIS PREVENTED?

PEOPLE CAN REDUCE THEIR CHANCE OF GETTING INFECTED BY FREQUENT HAND-WASHING, PROPER CLEANING OF INFECTED SURFACES, WASHING OF INFECTED CLOTHING, AND AVOIDING EATING FOOD OR DRINKING WATER THAT COULD BE INFECTED.