

# Self-Care Guidance for Gastrointestinal Illness (GI bug)

## ***What is viral gastroenteritis?***

This is an infection that can cause diarrhea and vomiting. It happens when a person's stomach and intestines get infected with a virus. One of the most common causes of gastroenteritis is **norovirus**, but other viruses can cause it, too. People can get viral gastroenteritis if they touch an infected person or a surface with the virus on it and then don't wash their hands or eat foods or drink liquids with the virus in them. If people with the virus don't wash their hands, they can spread it to food or liquids they touch.

## ***What are the symptoms of viral gastroenteritis?***

The infection causes diarrhea and vomiting. People can have either one or both. These symptoms usually start suddenly and can be severe. Viral gastroenteritis can also cause fever, headache, muscle aches, belly pain or cramping and loss of appetite.

**\*\*\*Norovirus—virus can only be killed by washing away with water for at least 20 seconds or cleaning with bleach on surfaces. \*\*\***

## ***What can I do to feel better?***

- If you are actively vomiting, **do not eat or drink anything for 2-3 hours**. It is very important to let your stomach and digestive tract rest for a while.
- After waiting 2-3 hours since last vomiting episode, start with sips of **water** or **ice chips** about every 10 minutes.
- Some helpful water additives are Liquid IV, Gatorade, Pedialyte, ginger ale, hydration multiplier and oral rehydration solution.
- **Diotame** - Decreases the activity of the stomach that causes nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. (follow label as directed)
- **Peptobismol**- follow label as directed

If you are **tolerating water and beginning to feel hungry**, you may advance your diet to include bland, easily digestible foods such as plain toast, pasta, rice, clear soups, crackers, pretzels, oatmeal, cooked or canned fruits, applesauce, bananas, and yogurt.

Foods that could help control diarrhea: bananas, rice, applesauce and toast.

If bland foods are tolerated well, continue to advance your diet to include baked or broiled chicken or fish and cooked vegetables.

**Avoid foods that are greasy, fatty, spicy and acidic and drinks with a lot of sugar, like juice or soda.**

**Avoid 3 big meals...try small frequent meals.**

*If water causes more vomiting, go back to nothing by mouth for 2-3 hours.*

If you have questions or concerns, please see a nurse, or call *TimelyCare, (24/7 Virtual Medical Care)* → Contact TimelyCare if you cannot get an on-campus appointment or it is after hours. (All full-time Messiah undergrads have access to *TimelyCare*)



## **Reasons to be seen in person:**

- If persists longer than 3 days
- If you develop black, tarry stools or obvious bleeding
- If vomiting persists more than 12 hours despite treatment
- If you are vomiting and a head injury has preceded the vomiting
- If your temperature is higher than 102 degrees

Engle Center Health Services

Hours: Monday-Friday 8-5 pm

Phone: 717-691-6035

**FOR ASSISTANCE WITH ON-CAMPUS EMERGENCIES, CALL DISPATCH AT ext.6005**