

GASTROENTERITIS

and DIET in the presence of DIARRHEA & VOMITING

Vomiting and/or Diarrhea are usually the result of *Gastroenteritis* - a generic term for infection of the gastro-intestinal tract. Accompanying symptoms frequently include abdominal cramping, body aches, and fever. Most cases of gastroenteritis are viral, short-term (1-5 days), and self-limiting. Because gastroenteritis is most often caused by viruses, antibiotics are usually of no value in treatment.

While vomiting and diarrhea are certainly disturbing and uncomfortable symptoms, they are also a logical defense mechanism on the part of the body. Basically, vomiting and diarrhea represent the body's efforts to rid itself of irritating substances, and to give the GI tract a much needed rest from the usual digestive work load while the body fights the illness. However, prolonged vomiting or watery bowel movements can lead to pronounced loss of fluids and valuable salts from the body. (In fact, dehydration due to diarrhea is the leading cause of death in the world's children). Therefore, dietary management of gastroenteritis for fluid replacement is crucial. The rule of thumb for diet during vomiting or diarrhea is: "*avoid irritating substances, while replacing fluid losses.*"

DIETARY STRATEGY

Day 1 - 2:

Initially, give the GI tract a total rest for about six hours. Then you should have nothing by mouth, except small sips of water, or ice chips. Once these can be kept down, proceed to:

YES

Clear Liquids

1. Water
2. Clear bouillon
3. Clear juices (apple, grape, cherry, cranberry - no citrus)
4. Clear jell-O
5. Light-colored sodas (Ginger-ale, Seven-Up, Sprite)
6. Instant fruit flavored drinks
7. Popsicle
8. Gatorade

NO

1. Solid foods
2. Spicy foods
3. Greasy or fatty foods
4. Non-cultured dairy
5. Alcohol, caffeinated tea or coffee, cola drinks, citrus

Day 2 - 4:

Your symptoms should be improving within 1 - 5 days, after which time you may add some solid food. But too sudden a resumption of your “regular” diet may stimulate vomiting or diarrhea again. Therefore, a “bland diet” is recommended for the next 1 - 3 days, until your GI function returns to normal.

Sometimes this diet is called a “*B -R-A-T*” diet:

B - Bananas

R - Rice, cream of rice, or cream of wheat

A - Applesauce

T - Toast, or soda crackers, with honey or clear jelly (*no butter*)

Also, you may add the following:

Cooked carrots or peas

Plain cooked potatoes

Non-greasy noodle soup

Baked or broiled fish or poultry without fat or butter, and,

Continue clear liquids

Thereafter: Resume normal diet gradually, leaving until last fat-containing foods; milk, raw fruits and raw vegetable. It may be a few days before “normal” bowel movements return.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:

Certain conditions require *prompt* medical attention. Call the Student Health Service Office (753-4812) or Cortland Memorial Hospital Emergency Room (756-3740) if you have the following:

1. Acute persistent abdominal pain
2. Persistent fever
3. Persistent vomiting and/or diarrhea without gradual improvement, despite dietary management
4. Blood in vomit or stool
5. Any other questions or concerns

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