

Environmental Services

Diarrhoea & Vomiting

(Gastro-intestinal Infections)

Diarrhoea and Vomiting is caused by a number of different organisms, including viruses, bacteria and parasites. These are usually contracted by eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, but some can be passed directly from person to person.

The main symptoms are diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, abdominal pain and fever but these may vary according to the responsible organism and the number of organisms ingested.

The incubation period varies from a few hours to a few days.

All gastro-enteritis or enteritis should be regarded as potentially infectious and persons in occupations or circumstances where there is a special risk of spreading the illness should usually be excluded from work or school until they are well and have normal stools.

Agents causing gastro-enteritis may infect without causing symptoms or be excreted for long periods after recovery from clinical illness but transmission is unlikely providing that good personal hygiene is practised.

Precautions

1. Hand Washing

Thorough hand washing and drying is the most important factor in preventing the spread of gastro-intestinal infections. This must be carried out by attendants (doctors, nurses, relatives, etc.) after handling patients, their bedding, clothing or sick room equipment and again before preparing or serving food.

Patients and attendants must always wash their hands after using the toilet and, before meals. Towels must not be shared.

2. Disposal of Excreta and soiled materials

In the home the patient should normally use the toilet. If urinals and bed pans have to be used the attendant should, if possible, wear rubber gloves and must thoroughly wash hands after attending the patient. Where possible disposable latex or vinyl gloves should be used, if not designate a pair of household rubber gloves for this use only. Soiled clothing and bed linen should be washed in a domestic washing machine on a "hot cycle". If the amount of soiling makes this impractical, as much faecal material as possible should be flushed away in running water, preferably into the toilet bowl. Rubber or disposable gloves should be worn and the hands must be thoroughly washed afterwards.

3. Disinfection

Toilet seats, flush handles, wash-hand basin taps and toilet door handles should be cleaned daily, using a soap solution and disposable cloths or more frequently depending on how often they are used. After visible soiling, wipe toilet seats with diluted hypochlorite/bleach disinfectant (1:10). These precautions are especially important in schools, nursery schools and residential institutions. Bed pans and urinals should be emptied into the toilet bowl and then washed with disinfectant and rinsed.

4. Education

Everyone should be instructed in personal hygiene and in the hygiene of the preparation and serving of food. This teaching should be reinforced in those suffering from, or who are contacts of, patients with, intestinal infections.

5. Social contacts should be restricted, especially with children, during the acute stage of the illness.

6. Food poisoning is a notifiable disease.

Normal Incubation Period

Campylobacter	3–5 days
Giardia	7–10 days
Salmonella	6–72 hours
Shigellosis (Bacillary dysentery)	1–7 days

Further Information

If you would like further information, please contact:

Environmental Services

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For more information on food safety please visit our website <http://www.rochford.gov.uk> and follow the links from Business to Food Safety or telephone 01702 318045



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