Vomiting & Diarrhea

are sometimes referred to as the *stomach flu,* however influenza virus is a respiratory infection and does not typically cause vomiting or diarrhea.

Causes include
- Bacteria, viruses or parasites
- Food poisoning
- Consumption of irritating food, drink or medication
- Pregnancy
- Overeating or overdrinking (especially alcohol)
- Stress or anxiety

Viral gastroenteritis (inflammation of the stomach and intestines) can spread easily from person to person. With some viral gastroenteritis (e.g. *norovirus*), people are contagious from the moment they begin to feel ill until at least three days after recovery. Good hygiene is critical to break the chain of transmission.

Transmission takes place by
- Touching contaminated objects then touching your mouth
- Consuming drinks or food contaminated by ill food handlers
- Having close contact with another person who is infected, for example by providing health care or sharing food or utensils

Symptoms include abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. People may feel very sick and vomit many times a day. Most people improve within three days. However, sometimes people become dehydrated and need medical attention. Dehydration is most serious for the very young, the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.

Self-Care for Adults

For vomiting, follow these instructions in order:
1. Do not eat or drink anything for several hours after vomiting.
2. Sip small amounts of water or suck ice chips every 15 minutes for 3-4 hours.
3. Next sip clear liquids every 15 minutes for 3-4 hours. Examples include water, sports drinks, flat soda, clear broth, gelatin, flavored ice or apple juice. Do not drink citrus juices. Increase fluids as tolerated.
4. When you can tolerate clear liquids for several hours without vomiting and if you’re hungry, try eating small amounts of bland foods such as bananas, rice, applesauce, dry toast and soda crackers (known as the *BRAT* diet). For 24-48 hours after the last episode of vomiting, avoid foods that can irritate or may be difficult to digest like alcohol, caffeine, fats/oils, spicy food and dairy products.
5. When you can tolerate bland food, you can resume your normal diet.

If diarrhea is the only symptom, try Imodium,* a non-prescription medication available at the UHS Pharmacy. Follow a bland diet (see item 4). After the passage of a soft, formed stool you can resume a normal diet.

If you are sick and live in a Residence Hall, you can ask a friend or Resident Advisor to bring you food from the dining room. If you have questions or concerns about your food intake, you may call the Dining Services dietician at 734-647-2614 or send email to eatsmart@umich.edu.

It’s a good idea to let Housing staff and your parent/s know if you are ill. If you need assistance, contact your Resident Advisor or Community Center.

If you are sick and work in food service, you should contact your supervisor.

When to Seek Medical Care

Anytime you experience vomiting, diarrhea or nausea and want to seek medical care, please do so. Here are situations when it is recommended:
- Unable to keep down liquids or food for more than 24 hrs.
- Fever (101°F or 38.3°C or higher) with abdominal pain (may include diarrhea, vomiting, nausea).
- Diarrhea for more than 3 days or without gradual improvement over 5 days.
- Show signs of dehydration, for example dizziness, no urination at least every 8 hours or severe fatigue.
- You have bloody diarrhea.
- Abdominal pain that is not relieved by vomiting and/or diarrhea (ex: abdominal pain is unrelated to episodes of vomiting or diarrhea).
- You have insulin-dependent diabetes and experience vomiting, diarrhea or nausea.
- Unable to tolerate medications you usually take.
- Recent travel in a country that poses a health risk.

*BRAT* diet includes:
- Bananas
- Rice
- Applesauce
- Toast, dry (& soda crackers)

If you vomit after taking medication
Retake medications if vomiting occurs within 30 minutes of taking your usual medication. If you vomited after taking oral contraceptive pills, use a back-up contraception method for the rest of the month.
PREVENTION

breaks the chain of transmission…

• Clean your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after toilet visits and before eating.

• Don’t share eating utensils, drinking glasses, toothbrushes or other personal items.

• Flush vomit and feces in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is clean.

• Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces including doorknobs and faucets immediately after an episode of illness. Spray the area with a disinfectant cleaner (e.g. Lysol).

• Wash soiled clothing or linens in hot water.

• Place contaminated waste in a plastic bag, tie the bag and put it in a trash receptacle.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

• Stay home when you are sick.

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick, if possible.

How to use UHS

❖ Schedule an appointment 734-764-8320

❖ On-line information www.uhs.umich.edu

FOR URGENT PROBLEMS

WEEKDAYS

Call 734-764-8320 or visit UHS in person. Medical staff will evaluate your need and determine whether you can be scheduled or seen same-day.

SATURDAYS 9AM-NOON

Visit UHS in person. Medical staff will evaluate your need and determine whether you can be scheduled or seen same-day.

NIGHTS & WEEKENDS

CALL for ADVICE 866-204-1082

or go to an urgent care facility or hospital emergency room. Fees are your responsibility.

Calling is free and may save you a trip to UHS or the emergency room. Call day or night… nurses can advise you about self-care or medical care.