



Stomach flu (Gastroenteritis)



Overview

This common illness affects your digestive system. It's not really a flu. It's an inflammation of the lining of your intestines. Doctors often call it "gastroenteritis." Most people recover from it with no treatment.

Causes

How do you get stomach flu? It can be caused by a virus, bacteria or parasite. Often, the culprit is a norovirus. You can get an infection from contaminated food or water. You can also get it from contact with an infected person.

Symptoms

Symptoms include abdominal cramps and pain. You may have diarrhea and vomiting. You may have headache, muscle aches, fever and chills. And, you may become dehydrated. Dehydration is most common in babies, young children, elderly people and in those with a weak immune system.

Treatment

Most of us can get over a stomach flu on our own. Get rest, and avoid things that upset your stomach until you feel better. Drink plenty of fluids to replace fluids you've lost. And ease back into your normal diet.

Prevention

A common form of childhood stomach flu can be prevented by the rotavirus vaccine. You can also prevent stomach flu by washing your hands and disinfecting hard surfaces. Keep away from other infected people. And avoid contaminated food or water when you travel. For more information, talk to your doctor.

