

# Gastroenteritis

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School Name  
School Nurse Name  
Phone Number  
Date

Dear Parent or Guardian,

This letter is to inform you that there has been an increase in the number of students at school reporting gastrointestinal symptoms including vomiting and diarrhea. These symptoms are most likely caused by a viral infection called gastroenteritis, also known as “the stomach flu” or “stomach bug.” The following information is intended to help you understand more about viral gastroenteritis and how to prevent further spread.

**What is viral gastroenteritis?** Gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and small and large intestines. When caused by a virus, it is referred to as viral gastroenteritis. Norovirus is the most common cause in older children and adults while Rotavirus is the most common cause in younger children.

**What are the symptoms?** Viral gastroenteritis symptoms come on quickly and typically start with vomiting and then watery stools 12–24 hours later. Nausea, cramping, headache, mild fever, and body aches may also occur.

**How is it treated?** There is a vaccine for Rotavirus but in general, there is no specific treatment for other viral gastrointestinal illnesses. The most important thing to do is to drink plenty of fluids to replace the liquid lost due to vomiting and diarrhea. With appropriate rest and hydration, most people feel better after 1–3 days.

**What are the risks?** Dehydration is the biggest risk associated with vomiting and diarrhea. Signs of dehydration include dry mouth and throat, decrease in urination, dizziness, and increased fussiness. If dehydration is suspected, prompt evaluation

by your child’s healthcare provider is required as treatment with IV fluids and other medical care may be necessary.

**How does it spread?** Gastroenteritis spreads extremely easily and quickly through an infected person’s stool and vomit. Transmission occurs through direct contact or from contaminated surfaces, food, or water.

**How long should children with gastroenteritis stay away from school?** Children with gastroenteritis can return to school 24 hours after the vomiting and diarrhea have stopped, they feel well enough to do so, and meet all other exclusion criteria.

**What should you do now?** Monitor your child for symptoms of gastroenteritis and notify your child’s pediatrician and school nurse if, at any time, you suspect your child may be infected. To help prevent spread:

- Practice good hygiene
- Avoid sharing food or drinks
- Don’t prepare food if you have vomiting or diarrhea
- Clean and disinfect surfaces
- Immediately remove and wash clothing that may be contaminated

Thank you for your careful attention to the information in this notice and for your diligence in helping to keep our school community as safe and healthy as possible. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to the school nurse with any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

School Nurse Name