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## Gastroenteritis

### What is it?

Gastroenteritis (also known as stomach flu, although unrelated to influenza) is inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract, involving both the stomach and intestines.

### How did I get it?

Gastroenteritis can have many causes, including viral or bacterial infections, medication reactions, food allergies, food/water poisoning or abuse of laxatives or alcohol. The duration and severity of the condition is relative to the illness.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can include fatigue, lack of appetite, abdominal growling and cramping, nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea and are usually brief. Typically, no serious consequences occur and the condition resolves itself in a few days without medical treatment.

### How do I treat it?

**Drink fluids and get plenty of rest.** Do not consume alcohol or caffeine. Avoid medications containing aspirin or ibuprofen, which may irritate your stomach, and do not take any medications by mouth unless directed by your medical care provider.

1. **Drink clear liquids.** Sip water/half-strength sports drinks or suck on ice chips. If you vomit using this treatment, do not take anything for 1 hour and start over again.
2. **If you do not vomit fluids,** you may progress to full-strength sports drinks; popsicles; clear broth; bouillon; decaf tea; clear apple juice; plain-flavored gelatin; and half-strength, clear, carbonated beverages without fizz (ginger ale, lemon-lime sodas, etc.). NOTE: To remove the fizz from soda, pour some into a glass and stir with a spoon.
3. **As you become hungry, try moving to soft foods.** Some examples include: saltine crackers, dry white bread/toast, bananas, apple sauce, plain white rice, soft cereals prepared with water, plain noodles and broth soups. Do not use sauces or condiments, including butter. You may return to a normal diet as tolerated within 24 hours after recovery from vomiting.