

# Gastroenteritis

**Gastroenteritis is an illness featuring abdominal cramps, vomiting and diarrhea.**

We often get asked at Brooke Street when people with symptoms of Gastro come in, “is there a lot of gastro around at the moment?”

We see gastro all year round but when the weather warms up and people get out and about and are more social that’s when we see increased gastro infections. Christmas time is often the time when gastro infection is common, people are sharing food and there are lots of left overs being re-served.

Food is the obvious source of contamination from bacteria, viruses or occasionally parasites but also contact with infected people or surfaces can cause gastro infection.

**Reduce your risk of “gastro”:**

- wash hands thoroughly after using the toilet, before eating and preparing food;
- dry hands on paper towels rather than cloth towels to avoid bacteria;
- keep toilet and bathroom facilities very clean
- keep cold food below 5 degrees and hot food above 60 degrees;
- make sure foods are properly cooked;
- Keep food preparation areas & equipment clean.

## **Treatment**

Try and drink plenty of clear fluids and stay hydrated, eat small amounts of carbohydrates like rice, potatoes, bread or crackers. Come and see us at Brooke Street if you are not improving, have a fever, bloody diarrhoea or are just feeling horrible. One of our GPs will assess your symptoms and we should be able to improve things with medication and sometimes IV fluids.

## **How long am I infectious?**

Generally you can go back to work or school 24hrs after the diarrhoea/vomiting has stopped. A specific 48-hour exclusion rule is considered for those in a higher-risk category for spreading gastro to others. These include food handlers, health care workers and children under the age of five at child care or playgroup.

**Michelle Duley – Treatment Room Nurse Team Leader**

For further information go to Better Health Channel

[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/gastroenteritis)

[https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact\\_sheets/Gastroenteritis\\_gastro/](https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Gastroenteritis_gastro/)