

GET THE FACTS

Acute Gastroenteritis

What is acute gastroenteritis?

Acute gastroenteritis refers to any disease that causes vomiting (one or more episodes of vomiting in a 24-hour period when the occurrence is not readily explained by other known pre-disposing medical factors) or diarrhea (increased volume of stool more than 3 times within 24 hours).

What are the symptoms?

In addition to vomiting or diarrhea, individuals may experience abdominal pain/cramping, bloody stools, and fever.

Individuals can become dehydrated, due to an increase in water lost through diarrhea. Severe dehydration can result in hospitalization, especially in the very young and the very old.

How long does this disease last?

The duration depends on what pathogen (virus, bacteria, or parasite) is causing the symptoms.

How does acute gastroenteritis spread?

- There are many different viruses, bacteria or other parasites. How it is spread depends on what is causing but there are common ways that it is spread:
 - Fecal-oral transmission; this often involves an infected child touching an object with contaminated fingers, then another child touching the same object and putting their fingers in their mouth.
 - It can also be spread by contaminated food or water, touching or consuming undercooked meat, especially poultry.
 - Contact with animals, as when children interact with class pets or at field trips to the petting zoo.

What preventive measures and treatments are available?

- Prevention depends on maintaining good disinfection practices and hand hygiene, proper cooking and storage of food, and exclusion of people who are experiencing symptoms.
- Treatment mostly involves supportive care, including supporting adequate hydration and may require electrolyte solutions for moderate or severe dehydration. Depending on whether the diarrhea is caused by a virus, bacteria, or another parasite, additional treatments may be necessary.
 - Please call your provider if they are experiencing diarrhea and any of the following:
 - Fever that lasts longer than 24 to 48 hours



- Bloody stools
- Vomiting that lasts more than 12 to 24 hours
- Vomit that looks green, tinged with blood, or like coffee grounds
- Abdomen (stomach, belly) that looks swollen
- Will not eat or drink
- Severe abdominal (stomach, belly) pain
- Rash or jaundice (yellow color of skin and eyes)

What should schools do?

- Notify CDPH in the event of a cluster (4 or more cases or otherwise 10% of a classroom, grade, or cohort, within a 24 hour period)
- Refer sick people to their healthcare provider for additional support.
- Notify exposed family and staff members in the event of a cluster, or in the event of a reportable disease diagnosis. For a list of reportable diseases please refer to:
<https://dph.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/idph/publications/idph/topics-and-services/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/Comm-Chart-school-9.15.2022.pdf>

What are recommendations for exclusion?

People with acute diarrhea should be excluded for a minimum of 24 hours after diarrhea has resolved, or upon the recommendations of their healthcare provider.

Individuals with bloody diarrhea or diarrhea caused by *Shigella*, *Salmonella*, Shiga toxin-producing *E.coli*, *Cryptosporidium* or *Giardia intestinalis* should be excluded until clearance by their healthcare provider.

