

Surviving the Stomach Bug

It's that time of year! You get a call from the school asking you to pick up your sick child. It seems that no matter how hard we try, the classic "stomach bug", finds its way into the classroom and our homes.

Here are a few tips for all ages, to help treat the symptoms and hopefully recover quickly!

Most of the time, stomach bugs are caused by viruses such as rotavirus, adenovirus and echovirus. Nonetheless, it can make for a miserable experience for children and their caregivers. However, with the right approach, lots of love and a few days to recover, it is typically not a serious illness. Most stomach viruses can last anywhere from 24 hours to 7 days. Staying on top of dehydration, rest and keeping your child comfortable is the most important part of care.

Of course, like any illness, if you are concerned or need advice, your pediatrician can provide guidance and further treatment.

Hydration is #1.

Provide clear fluids that your child will take. Clear fluids can include electrolyte solutions such as Pedialyte or Gatorade, fruit drinks, popsicles, broth, Jell-o, ginger ale, or clear sodas. Avoid caffeinated beverages because they increase urination and promote dehydration. Also be cautious of drinking large amounts of juice, as this may promote diarrhea.

Keep it slow and small.

Providing small amounts of food and drink will help minimize vomiting. Start with a teaspoon amount. This can be given as a sip, a spoonful, or a bite of a popsicle. Your child may be hungry and want more, but keeping it slow is still best. Wait 15 minutes between "teaspoonfuls". Keep track of how much your child is keeping down. If they are tolerating the small amounts, increase to a few teaspoons after an hour, and continue to increase in small increments. As your child starts to feel hungry and is tolerating clear fluids, you can begin to offer bland foods such as dry toast or crackers, bananas, noodle soup or, applesauce. If your child just has diarrhea, adding yogurt with active cultures may help relieve the symptoms. Again, avoid foods and drinks that promote loose stools such as apples, grapes and prunes.

Keep your child comfortable.

Aches and fevers can be treated with acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen products as directed. As always, avoid aspirin in children. Typically, fevers spike in the evening hours. Cool cloths to the forehead are almost *magic* in my office for students ☺

Signs of success

If you have successfully maintained hydration, your child should urinate at a minimum one bathroom trip every 8 hours. If it has been more than 8 hours, it is time to consult

the doctor. Remember, if your child has diarrhea, this will count as output. Often, the fluids accounted for in urination will not be present due to the diarrhea. If your child is well-hydrated, their mouth inside the cheek and gum area will remain moist and eyes will appear moist and not sunken in appearance. If you notice that this is not the case, please consult your child's doctor.

Any severe pain, blood in the vomit or stool, persistent fever or prolonged symptoms should be evaluated by a doctor. Good hand-washing, sanitizing of eating and drinking utensils and sanitizing of toys will keep the spread of illness to a minimum. As always, if you have any questions or uncertainty, please consult your child's doctor.

It's important to have your child wash their hands as soon as they get home from school and/or after school activities. Think of all the hands touching a basketball or volleyball during practice... Handwashing is the number one way to prevent the spread of illness.

Returning to school.

As stated in our Student Illness and Exposure Protocol, students need to stay home 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea, and fever without fever-reducing medications.

Please read and follow our protocol. If your child isn't themselves after 24 hours, keep them home until they are. Rarely are children, and most adults ready to return to their normal activity just 24 hours after the stomach bug.

Feel free to reach out with any concerns or questions. Thank you for keeping FCSD #2 a healthy environment for fun and learning!

Anna M Hinkle L.P.N

FCSD #2 Nurse/Food Service Director

O: 307-455-5511

ahinkle@fremont2.org