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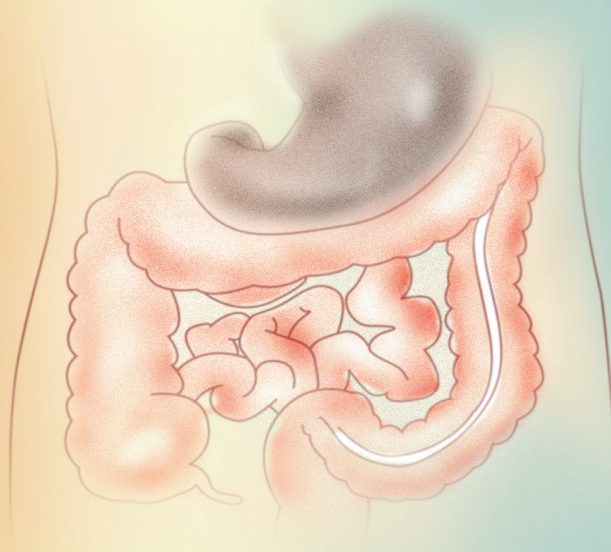
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Gastroenteritis



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What is Gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is an inflammation of the stomach and intestines due to acute infection by viruses or bacteria (or bacterial toxins). This can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, and sometimes abdominal pain, nausea and fever.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the differences between viral gastroenteritis and bacterial gastroenteritis?

Often caused by rotavirus or norwalk virus, viral gastroenteritis occurs after consumption of contaminated food or drinking water, as well as fecal-oral or droplet transmission. It is epidemic and more frequent during the winter months.



Bacterial gastroenteritis is often caused by food poisoning and eating improperly prepared food. Bloody stools may indicate bacterial infection.

What can I do in case of diarrhoea or vomiting?

You must replace fluids lost due to diarrhoea or vomiting, as serious dehydration can be fatal. You should drink fluids or electrolyte solutions and stop eating solid foods until the diarrhoea or vomiting passes, usually within a week. However, if the symptoms persist and bloody stools occur, seek medical help immediately.



Can I take any antidiarrheal medication?

Unless indicated by doctors, antidiarrheal medications are not recommended because the virus or bacteria may be retained in the body and prolong the infectious process. Antibiotic therapy is usually not indicated unless systemic involvement is present. Antibiotics do not work for viral gastroenteritis.

Is gastroenteritis recurrent?

No. But patients are more prone to diarrhoea or vomiting after recovery. To avoid infection, eat well-prepared and clean food after recovery. Maintain personal and household hygiene.

When to Seek Medical Help Immediately

- Less than 12 months old or old and physically weak
- Severe abdominal pain
- Blood in stool or tarry stool
- Diarrhoea persists over 4 days
- Symptoms of dehydration, such as dry and chapped lips, poor skin turgor and sunken eyes
- Have eaten with other people also suffering diarrhoea, possibly due to infection

Prevention

Effective measures include building up good body immunity, adopting a healthy lifestyle and adhering to good personal, food and environmental hygiene. If diarrhoea or vomiting occurs, do not go to school or work. Seek medical help immediately.