

# STOMACH BUG SURVIVAL GUIDE

by Alex Hoeft RN BSN, CLC, CD, HBP

Commonly referred to as the stomach flu, the stomach bug, or virus, is not influenza. It effects the gastrointestinal tract (stomach and intestines). It is often caused by viruses such as norovirus, rotavirus, sapovirus, and adenovirus.

## 1 SYMPTOMS

Usual symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramping, fatigue, and low grade fever. A high fever (over 102 is not typical of a stomach virus). Some people may only have nausea, while others will only have vomiting. It typically lasts 24-48 hours, but may last longer. **Children may be fine for 1-2 days and suddenly have a relapse of symptoms. This is not unusual.**

## 2 TRANSMISSION

The virus spreads by direct contact with a sick individual and is very contagious. You are contagious a few hours before symptoms start and may remain contagious for up to two weeks after symptoms resolve. You are most contagious for a brief time before symptoms start until 48 hours after symptoms resolve. **It only takes a few virus particles to get you sick.** Most virus particles are found in vomit and feces, but some may be transmitted via saliva.

## 3 PREVENTION

The best way to prevent the spread of the stomach bug is to **wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.** Normal alcohol-based hand sanitizers do not kill it. Some hand sanitizers (Zylast, Clorox bleach free hand sanitizing spray) may kill the virus, but it is not a guarantee. Keep your hands off your face. Quarantine the sick individual to their own room and bathroom if at all possible. Clean with a dilute bleach solution, hypochlorous acid, or hydrogen peroxide. **Standard Clorox or Lysol products do not kill the virus.**

## 4 TREATMENT

I recommend a **prescription of Zofran (Ondansetron) ODT 8 mg.** Take 1 tablet immediately upon feeling nauseous to prevent vomiting (works best for adults as they can feel the bug coming on). If a child vomits, give 1 tablet immediately after vomiting. The medication needs time to work (approx 20 min). If they child vomits again after taking 1 tablet, give them a 2<sup>nd</sup> tablet. Please consult your medical provider for appropriate dosages. Zofran may cause QT prolongation, do NOT take it if you have heart problems.

## 5 TREATMENT CONTINUED

**Fluids are the most important. Do not give fluids immediately after vomiting. Let the stomach rest** and slowly introduce fluids/electrolytes (1 tsp every 15 minutes until vomiting has subsided). Go slow with food. **The BRAT diet is outdated.** Allow whatever food sounds good (within reason). Avoid fatty, greasy, or heavy foods. If you push fluid or foods to fast you may overwhelm the digestive system and cause a flare up of symptoms after you are already recovered.

## 6 HOW TO CLEAN

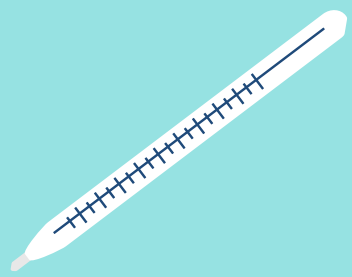
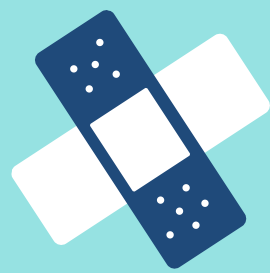
Throw out any heavily soiled linens if at all possible. If you cannot throw them out, wash with ½ cup of bleach on the highest heat setting and longest/heaviest wash cycle. If you cannot use bleach, wash the linens twice. Dry on the highest heat setting and longest heat cycle. Clean off any vomit/diarrhea prior to washing (**wear gloves/mask and avoid shaking**) and **spray with a dilute bleach solution, hydrogen peroxide, or hypochlorous acid.** Wipe down the bathroom after every vomit/diarrhea episode.

## 7 CLEANING CONTINUED

Wipe down high touch surfaces multiple times per day at least while symptoms are present and for up to 48 hours after symptoms subside. Run the dishwasher on a sanitize cycle or high-heat setting. Use paper plates/cups/silverware for the duration of the illness if at all possible. Remember, **the virus can live on surfaces for up to two weeks,** so continual sanitation and cleaning is important.

## 8 HELPFUL TIPS

Use disposable vomit (emesis) bags from Amazon. Quarantine the sick person to their own room/bathroom. Lay down waterproof table cloths and sheets near where the sick person will be camped out. Change your clothes whenever you leave the sick room. Takesumi supreme (bamboo charcoal) may help prevent/treat the virus. It binds to the virus and helps the body expell it. Do not take it within 2 hours of other medication as it will absorb that medication. **Do not send your child back to school or group activities until at least 48 hours** has passed since the last vomitng or diarrhea episode. Children may have a relapse of symptoms hours to days after they are already recovered. My daughter vomited again 5 days after she had already recovered.



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## 9 RECOMMENDED HAND SANITIZER

- Zylast
- Clorox bleach free hand sanitizing spray
- GermStar Noro

\*\*Reminder: Soap + water is the best option for cleaning hands\*\*

## 10 RECOMMENDED CLEANING PRODUCTS

- Dilute bleach
- Clorox Hydrogen Peroxide Bleach Free Cleaner wipes and spray (hospital grade)
- CleanSmart Hypochlorous Acid cleaner
- Steam cleaner for carpets (the only way to clean soiled carpets)

## 11 HELPFUL ITEMS

- Vomit (emesis) bags
- Disposable puppy pee pads
- Waterproof table cloths
- King sized sheets
- Liquid IV electrolyte solution
- Disposable paper plates/cups/silverware
- Paper towels for drying hands and for cleaning
- Heating pad
- Epsom salts + baking soda for detox bath
- Red light therapy

## 12 EMETOPHOBIA

**Emetophobia is the irrational, often debilitating, fear of vomit.**

Some emetophobes fear only themselves vomiting, others fear only others vomiting, some fear both. Emetophobia is more common than most people believe, but it often isn't talked about. There is help for emetophobia. CBT + ERP therapy are very helpful. The Thrive Programme also offers relief through a self-taught manual or working with a coach. You do not need to continue to suffer. You do not need to be stuck with this forever. Healing is possible!

## 13 WHEN ARE YOU "SAFE"

**Most viruses will spread within 12-72 hours.** This is because the incubation period (the time from when you are exposed to the time it takes you to get sick) is usually around this time. If you were exposed to someone, you can expect to be sick within 12-72 hours if you are going to get sick. If you live with someone who is sick, you are not "safe" until 2 weeks after symptoms have stopped because the virus can live on surfaces for up to 2 weeks and individuals may continue to shed the virus for up to 2 weeks. While the 2 week mark is the "safe" mark, most people will get sick within 1 week of the first person getting sick.

## 14 TIPS FROM A MOM OF 6

Have the healthy children sleep with a vomit bag or lined trashcan next to their bed. It is very likely that another child will fall ill within 12-72 hours of the first child. Instruct them that if they feel ill to reach for the vomit bag or trashcan and to call for you if they vomit (keep a monitor on the children) so that they do not track the virus throughout the house. I recommend using vomit bags instead of vomiting into the toilet. The vomit bags are disposable and contain the mess (less virus particles spreading in the air!) If a healthy child starts to feel ill, you can give zofran (likely will need 8-16 mg) to avoid vomiting. Use pullups on any children with diarrhea (even potty trained children). It reduces the amount of laundry that you need to do.

