PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS IN THE HOSPITAL

If a patient is experiencing viral gastroenteritis:

- Posting a precautionary sign outside the patient's room
- All patient activities are restricted inside the patient's room until the patient has recovered
- Dedicating a commode chair at the bedside
- Wearing a protective gown and gloves when having contact with a patient or patient's environment
- Practicing proper hand hygiene when entering and exiting the patient's room
- Cleaning and disinfecting patient care equipment after each patient use
- Daily cleaning and disinfection of each patient's room and washroom



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT INFECTION CONTROL AT 416.762.7316, EXT. 2238.

RUNNYMEDE HEALTHCARE CENTRE
625 Runnymede Rd.
Toronto, ON M6S 3A3
T: 416 762 7316
F: 416 762 3836
www.runnymedehc.ca

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Viral Gastroenteritis

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WHAT IS VIRAL GASTROENTERITIS?

Viral gastroenteritis is inflammation of the stomach and bowels caused by viruses.

Though it is commonly called the "stomach flu," viral gastroenteritis is not caused by the influenza or flu virus.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

Different viruses, including rotavirus, adenovirus, and norovirus, cause viral gastroenteritis. Norovirus is the most common.

IS IT CONTAGIOUS?

Yes, it is contagious and can be spread to anyone. Those infected with viral gastroenteritis are contagious from the moment they begin to feel ill to at least two days after recovery.

HOW IS IT CONTRACTED?

Viral gastroenteritis can be contracted in any of the following ways:

- Eating food or drinking liquids contaminated with the virus
- Touching contaminated surfaces with your hands and then, without cleaning your hands, touching your mouth or face
- Coming into direct contact with a person with viral gastroenteritis and then, without cleaning your hands, touching your mouth or face

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Headache
- Fever
- Abdominal cramps or stomach ache

Symptoms generally begin to appear 1- 2 days after infection and can last up to 10 days, depending on the strain of the virus an individual is infected with.

While most people completely recover from viral gastroenteritis with no long- term effects, it can become a serious illness for individuals who are unable to drink enough fluids to replace what is lost from vomiting and diarrhea.

Infants, young children, and seniors are at risk of dehydration from loss of fluids. People with compromised or weakened immune systems are also at risk and may require hospitalization.

HOW DO YOU TREAT IT?

Consult your physician about the types of fluids to consume when you are dehydrated.

Medications, including antibiotics, should be avoided unless recommended by a physician.

HOW DO YOU PREVENT IT?

- Wash hands frequently, especially after using the toilet and before preparing or eating food
- Wash hands immediately after having contact with a person who has symptoms of viral gastroenteritis
- Disinfect contaminated surfaces with household bleach-based cleaners
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before eating
- Wash soiled clothing and linens immediately