



What is Gastroenteritis?

Gastroenteritis is an infection that affects the stomach and intestines. For most individuals, it is a mild illness; however, individuals in hospitals and long-term care are at risk of becoming dehydrated if they are not able to drink enough fluids to replace the fluids lost through vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Treatment of this illness is aimed at relieving symptoms and preventing dehydration. Noroviruses and Rotaviruses are germs that cause gastroenteritis and are found in the vomit or stool of infected individuals.

What are the symptoms of gastroenteritis?

Symptoms include, but are not limited to:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal cramps
- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Fever
- Weakness

How is gastroenteritis spread?

- Contact with vomit or stool from an infected individual.
- Contact with items in the environment that are contaminated with vomit or stool.
- Consuming contaminated food, water, or ice.

Why are control measures necessary?

- Control measures are necessary to prevent the spread of gastroenteritis within the hospital or long-term care homes. An outbreak is usually declared when there are at least two (2) or more cases of gastroenteritis within 48-hours on a nursing unit.

During an outbreak, control measures focus on:

- Restricting movement of staff within the building.
- Restricting clients/residents to their rooms/units where possible.
- Cancelling all group activities.
- More frequent cleaning of environmental surfaces.
- Reinforcing routine infection control precautions, such as good hand hygiene and the use of contact precautions.
- Implementing visitor precautions or restrictions on a nursing unit or the entire building, depending on the severity of the outbreak.

What visitor precautions are necessary?

Efforts will be made to avoid complete restriction of visiting as it may cause hardship for clients/residents and their families. However, precautions may be necessary in some cases depending on the severity of the outbreak.