Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis, sometimes referred to as “stomach flu” is an irritation or infection of the stomach and intestines usually caused by a virus. Symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and/or fever. In 2-3 days most patients feel better without needing to take any special medicine or needing to seek medical care. If symptoms don’t seem to be resolving as expected, dehydration can be a concern. Dehydration occurs when fluid output exceeds fluid intake as may happen with persistent vomiting and diarrhea. Dehydration may be evident by decreased urine output or by dryness of the mouth and lips. If you feel you are dehydrated or if symptoms are not resolving, it is important to be evaluated by your health care provider.

The following steps may be used to remedy the effects of vomiting and diarrhea.

Step 1:
- Drink liquids frequently (at intervals of 15-30 minutes) in small amounts during the day or when possible during the night. Try to take 4-8 oz./hr.
  - Liquids recommended (clear liquids):
    o Gatorade or similar drink.
    o Decarbonated 7-up or ginger ale, with or without ice (beverages can be decarbonated by adding 1 tablespoon hot water or stirring until carbonation has escaped). Avoid products with caffeine.
    o Kool-Aid or other fruit flavored drinks (grape, apple, etc.), diluted may be more easily tolerated.
    o Jello or diluted jello water.
    o Plain water.
  - Not recommended - milk products or solid foods; no orange, tomato, or grapefruit juice; no aspirin or antidiarrheal preparations.

Step 2:
- Expect at least 6-12 hours at Step 1 before moving on to Step 2.
- Vomiting typically will resolve before diarrhea, once you are able to take liquids in step 1 without difficulty, you may move on to Step 2.
  - Liquids and solids advised in this step:
    o Any of the liquids noted in Step 1.
    o Bananas, applesauce
    o Clear broth or clear soups (eg. chicken noodle)
    o Toast, crackers, dry cereals, pretzels’

Step 3:
- After 12-24 hours on Step 2, you may move on to other foods that are bland, low-fat types.
  - It is recommended that you avoid drinking milk until several days after the diarrhea has stopped.
  - Some foods to add at this step include:
    o Mashed potatoes, other cooked fruits or vegetables, rice, noodles.
    o Your diet can continue to expand as you continue to tolerate each addition to your diet.