

Managing Dehydration: Food Poisoning VS the Stomach Flu



Dehydration, simply put is what happens when your body loses more fluid than you take in. Water makes up about 60% of the human body, so it's clear that we need water to keep us going every day. When you're dehydrated, it doesn't just mean you are losing water. It also means you're losing electrolytes such as potassium and sodium, which helps your body breath, move, talk and do all the other things it needs to operate and feel our best!

How can you tell if you're dehydrated?

When you or your child is dehydrated, you may feel multiple effects, and the signs and symptoms can differ with age.

Infants

- Fever
- Unusual tiredness
- No tears
- Dry mouth
- No wet diapers (for 3 hours or longer)



Children & adults

- Extreme thirst
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Headache
- Dark-coloured urine
- Less frequent urination
- Crankiness
- Dry skin
- Dry mouth
- Constipation



Many things can lead to dehydration, including the flu, food poisoning, travel, heat, exercise and fever. Let's break down a few:

Food poisoning

Also called foodborne illness, food poisoning is a sickness caused by eating contaminated food. The causes of food poisoning include viruses, parasites, and bacteria. Did you know there are more than 250 different foodborne diseases? Depending on the cause, symptoms often include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, which can occur over a short period of time.

Managing dehydration

First and foremost, to help you or your child feel better, fluids and electrolytes lost from diarrhea and vomiting **MUST** be replaced.

Your first thought might be to grab a juice or sports drink to get back those lost electrolytes. However, it's important to mention that many of these drinks are high in sugar and low in sodium, which can sometimes make the symptoms of diarrhea and vomiting due to food poisoning worse.

Instead, try an over-the-counter oral rehydration solution. These solutions contain electrolytes, sodium, potassium, and chloride in specific proportions to replenish both fluids and electrolytes.

Tips for managing dehydration from food poisoning



Let your stomach settle:

Stop eating or drinking for a few hours



Rest:

Give your body a chance to recover by resting



Eat plain foods:

Gradually begin to eat small bites of bland foods such as crackers, rice, and bananas



Avoid certain foods:

Don't eat dairy or fatty foods & avoid caffeine and alcohol until you feel better



Avoid smoking:

Smoking will exacerbate symptoms





As always, if you are concerned about dehydration from food poisoning, CDHF recommends consulting your health care professional.

What about the stomach flu?

Unlike the seasonal flu (a respiratory infection caused by the influenza virus), the “stomach flu” is due to several viruses that cause the intestines to become inflamed. If you’ve ever experienced the stomach flu, you know it hits hard and comes on fast.

Symptoms include



- Chills
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe Aches & Pains



Tips for managing dehydration from the stomach flu



The unfortunate news is that cause the stomach flu is a viral infection, so it has to run its course and get better on its own



Eat plain foods: gradually begin to eat small bites of bland foods such as crackers, rice, and bananas



Avoid sugary foods: Try to avoid sugary foods or drinks



Rest: Give your body a chance to recover by resting



Try an oral rehydrating solution: Drink small sips of an oral rehydrating solution according to instructions provided on the label

Feel better faster

Although the symptoms of stomach flu and food poisoning are very similar, the difference is in the duration of the illnesses. Food poisoning often clears up in a few days, whereas stomach flu can last ten days or more.

What we do know is those common symptoms can lead to dehydration which can make you feel even worse, so be sure to have oral-hydrating solutions on hand or in your first-aid kit, so you are well-equipped and ready to fight dehydration before it occurs!

10

DAYS OR MORE



For more information on managing digestive issues and conditions, visit our website.