

# Stop the Spread of Gastroenteritis



TARANAKI DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD

The Taranaki region is currently experiencing outbreaks of gastroenteritis (gastro) and due to the nature of the spread a virus is the most likely cause. Viral gastro can be easily spread from person to person through contact with contaminated hands, faeces or vomit or by contaminated food or water.

The main symptoms are vomiting and diarrhoea. Other symptoms include stomach cramps, nausea, fevers and tiredness. The symptoms may last 3 - 4 days and most people recover without any problems.

Treatment mainly consists of keeping up oral fluids to prevent dehydration. This is particularly important in infants and young children as they can become dehydrated very quickly.

## **Please consult your doctor or hospital if:**

- Your child is under six months of age.
- You/ your child are unable to stop vomiting or keep any fluids down.
- You/ your child has blood or mucus in the bowel motion.
- You/ your child has a high fever.
- You/ your child is not getting better.
- You/ your child has other health problems.

## **The best way to take fluids is small amounts frequently. Suitable fluids include:**

- Oral rehydration solutions available from the local pharmacy. Make up according to the directions.
- DILUTED cordial ( not low calorie) ¼ cup of cordial to 4 cups of water.

- DILUTED Lemonade and fruit juice (not low calorie):  
1 cup to 4 cups of water.

**WARNING** use of undiluted drinks can make the diarrhoea worse. There is no need to restrict food or “starve” the bowels. Your body needs the nutrition in order to heal itself.

## **How can we prevent further spread of the infection**

- Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should be kept home from school or child care until there have been no symptoms for at least 24 hours.
- Adults with diarrhoea should stay away from workplaces until there have been no symptoms for at least 24 hours.
- Any adult who works as a food handler who has vomiting/ diarrhoea should stay away from work until there have been no symptoms for at least 48 hours.
- Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after going to the toilet, changing nappies, gardening and handling animals, and before and after handling food.
- Always dry hands thoroughly (at least 20 seconds) after washing and rinsing preferably using paper towel and avoid sharing towels.
- Clean bathrooms and toilets thoroughly.
- People with diarrhoea should not swim in a swimming pool until at least 14 days after the diarrhoea has stopped.