

Tips for surviving a bout of 'stomach flu'

Stomach flu is one of those ailments that tends to strike from time to time - and it sees a crush of patients crowding into area physician offices and hospital emergency rooms as individuals of all ages suddenly find themselves laid low by a highly contagious and quick-striking virus.

"This bug goes by a lot of names. But whether you call it a stomach flu, a vomiting virus or any other name, the fact is that if you get it you are going to feel bad for a few days," said Dr. Christopher Zipp, a family physician at the UMDNJ-School of Osteopathic Medicine. "This virus causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, fever, and head and muscle aches. Although the virus itself most often is not a serious health threat, it can cause serious complications like dehydration, which can be especially dangerous for young children and older adults."

Dr. Zipp offers these tips for surviving a bout with the 'stomach flu'.

- Drink plenty of liquids to prevent dehydration. Water or half-strength juices are best. Avoid soda or sports drinks as they have little nutritional value, but they can be given to individuals who cannot tolerate the preferred liquids.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Take over-the-counter, non-aspirin pain relievers like acetaminophen for fever and body aches.
- Stay home until fully recovered. Sick individuals may continue to be contagious for up to 72 hours after they feel well again.
- Adopt good hygiene practices to prevent the spread of the virus. Wash your hands often and dispose of used tissues immediately. Wash soiled bed linens or clothes separately from other laundry.

"Keep in mind that this illness is caused by a virus. Antibiotics, which work against bacterial infections, will not help you to recover," Dr. Zipp added. "Most people will begin to feel better after a couple of days, but don't hesitate to contact your physician if you or a family member experiences extreme symptoms, such as uncontrolled vomiting or a high fever that persists and does not respond to over-the-counter medications."

Source: UMDNJ-School of Osteopathic Medicine