

STOMACH BUGS

Food, waterborne and non-food related transmission of gastrointestinal infections (gastroenteritis) caused by bacteria or viruses, all remain at unacceptable levels despite the fact that they are largely controllable by practicing good food and kitchen hygiene, and only drinking clean safe water. Globally, gastroenteritis is especially common in high risk groups such as the elderly and young children.

KEY FACTS

IN THE UK, VIRUSES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR 30% TO 40% OF GASTROENTERITIS CASES IN CHILDREN²

GLOBALY 125,000 CHILDREN EACH YEAR FROM FOOD-RELATED GI INFECTIONS¹

SALMONELLOSIS, AN INFECTION CAUSED BY THE BACTERIUM SALMONELLA, IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON AND WIDELY DISTRIBUTED FOODBORNE DISEASES, WITH TENS OF MILLIONS OF CASES OCCURRING WORLDWIDE EVERY YEAR³



SYMPTOMS

Main symptoms of gastroenteritis in children include abdominal cramps, stomach pain, nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting. They may also experience a high temperature, headache and swollen lymph glands, depending on the type of organisms causing the infection. In severe cases of gastroenteritis, loss of bodily fluid can result in dehydration, a life-threatening condition that needs medical attention. Signs of dehydration include sunken eyes, light-headedness, increased thirst, dry or sticky mucus membranes in the mouth and decreased urine output.

HOW DO THEY SPREAD?

Gastroenteritis results from eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, or indirectly by transferring an organism from a contaminated surface or item to the mouth, usually by the hand. Young children are particularly at risk of gastroenteritis because they are particularly vulnerable to infection by rotavirus.

HOW CAN I HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD?

PRACTICE PROPER HAND HYGIENE

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean running water, especially after using the toilet, changing nappies, before eating, and before and after preparing food. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol based hand sanitiser. If hands are visibly dirty they should always be washed.

CLEAN & DISINFECT CONTAMINATED SURFACES

Clean and disinfect food preparation surfaces before and after use. Remember to wash hands before and after preparing food. Frequently touched surfaces in the kitchen such as taps, and door handles can be hotspots for the transfer of the microorganisms that cause gastroenteritis, so make sure they are cleaned and disinfected regularly.

FOOD AND WATER

Food should be cooked thoroughly, at 70°C or above, and not prepared by someone who has a gastrointestinal infection. Where possible refrigerate at 5°C, if not possible food should be freshly cooked and eaten immediately. Clean safe water should be used for drinking and food preparation, and any water storage vessels should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

CLEAN LAUNDRY

Microorganisms present on contaminated items such as underwear or washable nappies can survive low temperature washing potentially contaminating other items in the wash. Always wash heavily soiled items separately on a hot wash (greater than 60°C) or at a lower temperature using a suitable laundry disinfectant. Other items such as linens and underwear can be washed together on a hot wash or with a laundry disinfectant in washes lower than 60°C.

