

## GASTROENTERITIS AND SUMMER. AN ENCOUNTER TO BE AVOIDED

### GASTROENTERITIS

is more frequent in summer, especially those related to food poisoning, due to the greater chance of consuming spoiled food as it becomes easier for some microorganisms to multiply.

Gastroenteritis is an irritation and inflammation of the digestive tract, including the stomach and intestines. The most common causes are viral, bacterial, parasites and food poisoning, with diarrhoeal disease caused by gastroenteritis usually lasting on average five to seven days.

Most gastroenteritis cases are caused by food or water contaminated by bacteria (Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter, E. coli, among others) or viruses (Rotavirus, Norovirus, Adenovirus, among others).

Infections can also be passed on from person to person, especially if someone with diarrhoea does not wash their hands well after using the toilet.

Salmonella infections can be contracted by touching reptiles such as turtles or iguanas and then putting the fingers in the mouth.

It is important to emphasise that gastroenteritis can be extremely infectious. People who are infected should wash their hands frequently and avoid contact with others. Ideally, the patient should remain at home until there are no symptoms (diarrhoea and/or vomiting) for at least 48 hours.

In addition to watery diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, fever, muscle pain and headache are also common.

It is necessary to pay special attention to dehydration caused by diarrhoea and vomiting, especially in children, and drinking water is very important, in some cases compensated by electrolytes. In recent years, probiotics have been widely used as a therapeutic complement, to replenish and regulate the intestinal microbiota.

In some situations, medication may be prescribed to relieve difficult-to-control nausea and vomiting, as well as diarrhoea.

The best way to prevent gastroenteritis is by following strict measures of hygiene. It is essential to always wash



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your hands after going to the toilet, before handling food and after tending the garden or handling pets. In the kitchen, special care is needed when handling white meat and eggs and storing raw or processed foods at low temperatures.

Towels used by a person who has gastroenteritis should not be shared, and toilets should be disinfected regularly.

When traveling, always prefer bottled water. In places with poor conditions of sanitation, prefer ice-free drinks and brush teeth with bottled water.

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Bacteriological faeces analysis is only carried out in more severe and prolonged cases, or when, for example, there is food poisoning on a large scale. Then the origin of gastroenteritis is investigated using stool culture.

Given the high probability of being a self-limited viral gastroenteritis - which disappears in a few days - the first line of treatment consists only of supportive measures, namely hydration.

Article submitted by the HPA Group

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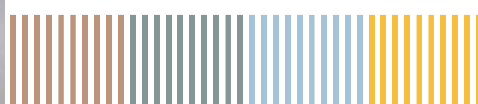
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