

# GASTROENTERITIS

## DECISION tool

To protect your health and that of other people

Gastroenteritis can be caused by a virus, a bacterium or a parasite.

Norovirus is the most frequent cause of gastroenteritis in adults while rotavirus is more common in children.

The main symptoms of gastroenteritis are as follows:

- Diarrhea : at least three watery stool or loose stool, within a 24-hour period or an increase in the frequency or quantity of bowel movements;
- stomach pains and cramps;
- nausea;
- vomiting;
- mild fever (in some cases);
- muscle aches;
- loss of appetite;
- change in overall condition (weakness, drowsiness, irritability, confusion).

The symptoms of gastroenteritis usually last 24 to 72 hours.

An affected person is usually contagious when they have symptoms and especially when symptoms are at their worst.

A person can remain contagious for a few weeks after the symptoms have disappeared.

Protective and hygiene measures can help prevent the spread of infection:

- do frequent hand hygiene.
- clean and disinfect toilet seats and any surfaces or objects that may be contaminated by stool or vomit;
- get young children vaccinated against rotavirus. It's the best way to protect them.

[Québec.ca/GrippeRhumeGastro](https://quebec.ca/GrippeRhumeGastro)

## IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OF GASTROENTERITIS,

consult this table to make the best decision for yourself and your loved ones.

If you suspect a traveller's diarrhea, contact Info Santé 811.

I have diarrhea without any other symptoms and my overall condition is good

### DECISION

I probably have a temporary upset stomach. A balanced diet should alleviate the symptoms. If necessary, I call Info Santé 811, option 1.

I have at least three diarrhea (watery stool or loose stool), within a 24-hour period or an increase in the frequency or quantity of bowel movements:

- stomach pains and cramps;
- nausea;
- vomiting;
- loss of appetite;
- mild fever;
- headache;
- muscle aches.

### DECISION

I probably have gastroenteritis that is caused by a virus. It will last 24 to 72 hours. I stay at home until the symptoms disappear. I self care at home. I consult Québec.ca. If necessary, I call Info Santé 811, option 1.

I have symptoms of gastroenteritis and I am at risk of complications (children under 2 years of age, people aged 65 and over, pregnant women, people who have a chronic disease).

### DECISION

I call Info Santé 811, option 1. A nurse will assess my condition and will make recommendations based on my health condition.

- I have had diarrhea for over 48 hours without any improvement and I have followed the instructions for rehydrating and eating.
- I have had diarrhea and a fever for over 48 hours.
- I have been vomiting for over 48 hours without any improvement and I have followed the instructions for rehydrating and eating.
- I have had diarrhea for over a week.

### DECISION

I consult my doctor as soon as possible. If I don't have one, I visit Québec.ca/GuichetAccès. If in doubt, I contact Info Santé 811, option 1.

- I have a lot of blood in my stool or black stool.
- I have diarrhea with severe abdominal pain.
- I have diarrhea, I am very thirsty and I have not urinated for over 12 hours.
- I have frequent episodes of vomiting that are not decreasing after 4 to 6 hours.
- There is stool or blood (red or looks like coffee grounds) in my vomit.
- My overall condition is getting worse (weakness, drowsiness, irritability, confusion).

### DECISION

I go immediately to the emergency room. If I need immediate assistance or help, I call 911.

The information in this document does not replace the opinion of a healthcare professional. If you have any questions about your health, call Info Santé 811, option 1 or consult a healthcare professional.