

Practical Preventable Medicine



Gastro Outbreaks. What to and what Not to do!

It's a family's worst nightmare...the outbreak of Gastro-Enteritis in the home can be crippling. Vomiting from one end and on the toilet for the other is Yuk. That and the fact you know it's gonna be a rough 24 or so hours leaving the victim useless for a day and the likelihood of it 'going through the house' is real. That is, unless it's food poisoning but whatever the reason despite how common it is amongst us, most people are unsure how to deal with it.

Gastro occurs when a pathogen (disease causing virus/bacteria/micro-organism) invades the intestines and causes us to attempt to evict the invader in the most unpleasant fashion. In Chinese Medicine it's called 'Sudden Turmoil' which is very apt indeed!

Generally it usually a 24 hr thing and most recover quite well, but it still important to keep hydrated, so here are a range of management strategies that you cut out and keep somewhere in case it strikes....

Firstly don't bother giving plain water to drink as likely it will come straight up again as the pathogen can block the ability to absorb it. Oral Rehydration Therapy is the W.H.O. treatment and can be made simply at home. Take 1 litre of water; add 1 level teaspoon of Sea Salt and 4-heaped teaspoons of sugar. Stir well and it should taste a little like salty tears. Now just sip slowly for a while if there has been problems keeping anything down, your body can immediately suck it right in. This is known as an Isotonic solution as it closely resembles the concentration of solutes in the blood, and theoretically what sports drinks are based on, as well commercial preparations with added metabolites.

Once you begin to keep that down, move onto black tea with a teaspoon of sugar that can help with the other end. Then begin to offer simple foods such as rice cooked to a soup like consistency (congee) with salt and sugar or honey to taste or a salty vegetable soup or even pumpkin soup. Grated apple that has been left to brown a little is great for the littlies and works a treat, or yoghurt drinks and dry bikkies with only jam.

Foods to avoid include milk, fats and oils, meats, and junk foods of any kind. If food poisoning is suspected or symptoms persist, try the century old Chinese remedy of Bao Ji Pills, no Asian would leave home without them and they kept me safe in China for 4 months even eating street food! Always see your health professional if symptoms are prolonged or there is blood in the stool.

Until next time

Stay well

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