**Gastroenteritis (Stomach Flu) Instructions**

Because gastroenteritis is self limiting, meaning symptoms will usually subside within 24-48 hours without treatment, not all people affected will seek or need medical attention. Often gastroenteritis symptoms are caused by Noroviruses, a family of viruses that are very contagious. Antibiotics and flu shots do not treat or prevent viral gastroenteritis.

Treatment of Gastroenteritis:

* Wait at least 2 hours after the last time you vomited before beginning sips of water or other clear fluids. Clear fluids are liquids you can see through. For the first 24 hours rest and drink lots of clear fluids like water, soda, tea, jello, Gatorade and ice pops. You may also suck on ice chips.
* It is more important to stay hydrated with clear fluids than it is to introduce food in the first 24 hours. If you are unable to stop vomiting after your stomach is empty, or cannot tolerate even sips of fluids, please call the Health Center at 207-786-6199 to arrange to come for medical evaluation. Dehydration is a serious condition and occurs more quickly when vomiting is accompanied by diarrhea.
* Persistent abdominal pain that is not relieved by vomiting or diarrhea should be medically evaluated. Signs and symptoms of appendicitis can include vomiting and abdominal pain.
* The stomach flu generally lasts 1-2 days. As you tolerate clear fluids and symptoms subside you may begin adding easily digested foods once you feel like eating. Some ideas are bagels, toast, clear broth based soups, saltines, bananas, rice, scrambled eggs and applesauce.
* As you progress to a regular diet, introduce foods slowly as your appetite returns. Dairy products and fresh fruits and vegetables are harder to digest so reintroduce them back in smaller amounts than usual. They should also be avoided if you are having diarrhea.
* In addition to the above instructions, **please call or come to the Health Center if you are not getting well, are too sick to care for yourself, or have other symptoms with the stomach flu such as fever, feeling faint, or persistent abdominal pain.**
* To prevent further spread of the flu wash your hands frequently with soap and water and avoid sharing beverage glasses, cans, bottles or utensils. The infection can be spread when others touch surfaces or items contaminated with the virus, and then put their hands in their mouth. Door knobs, railings, bathroom fixtures, pens, and keyboards are common culprits.