

## 6 Ways to Get Over the Stomach Flu Faster

Flu season is upon us, which means it's also the season for stomach flu—which isn't influenza, of course, but a catchall phrase for that miserable mix of diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps usually caused by a type of virus called [norovirus](#)[this link opens in a new tab](#).

Winter is a common time for norovirus because of the increase in the number of holiday-related meals, since norovirus can be transmitted through food that's been prepared by an infected person, explains [Niket Sonpal, MD](#)[this link opens in a new tab](#), assistant clinical professor at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York and St. George's University School of Medicine, specializing in gastroenterology and internal medicine. “Additionally, in the winter, we tend to spend more time indoors with people who are sick, and hand washing may decrease because it's cold. Thus, the virus spreads more easily,” says Dr. Sonpal.

Washing your hands frequently and making a point to not share foods or utensils with people who are already infected can help you dodge the stomach flu. Too late and you're already doubled over in your bathroom? While there's no cure for norovirus, these tips will help you feel better sooner.

### Drink lots of water

“Fluids are critically important, since you're losing vital bodily fluids through sweating, vomiting, and diarrhea,” says Dr. Sonpal. “If you're having trouble keeping liquids down, try taking small sips at regular intervals or chewing ice chips.” If you can't keep *anything* down or start showing signs of [dehydration](#)[this](#)

[link opens in a new tab](#) like a headache, muscle cramps, dark yellow pee, or not being able to pee very much, call your doctor or consider going to urgent care. You may need IV hydration.

## Give your body rest

You won't get any points for coming into work if you're basically hugging a toilet all day. (This is especially true if you work around food or people who are more susceptible to getting sick like children or the elderly.) Plus, "when you have the stomach flu, your body needs rest in order to fight off the infection," says Dr. Sonpal. "Get plenty of sleep and reduce the amount of activity you normally do during the day. This is doctor-recommended Netflix binge time."

## Go on the BRAT diet

Once you think you can handle eating solid food again, start with the BRAT (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast) diet. "These four foods are easy to digest, contain carbohydrates to give you energy, and replenish nutrients," says Dr. Sonpal. Bananas help replace the potassium you lose through vomiting and diarrhea, and applesauce contains pectin, which puts the brakes on diarrhea. Also, both brown rice and whole-wheat bread contain fiber, which can be tough on your raw, inflamed intestines. So stick with the easier-to-digest white versions.

## Consume ginger

"Some people use ginger to control their [stomach flu] symptoms," notes [Van Pham, DO](#), [this link opens in a new tab](#) primary-care physician at MemorialCare

Medical Group in Long Beach, California. Whether ginger chews or ginger tea, some form of this remedy is worth a try if you can keep it down. Research shows that not only can [gingerthis link opens in a new tab](#) reduce nausea, but it may help cut the duration and severity of vomiting by up to 20%.

## Try anti-diarrhea meds

Over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medication, like loperamide hydrochloride (Imodium) or bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol), can provide some short-term relief, but “check with your doctor before trying OTC options,” cautions Dr. Sonpal. “It’s often better to let your body clear the diarrhea then to slow it down with these meds.” And remember: Pepto-Bismol isn’t safe to take if you’re [allergic to aspirinthis link opens in a new tab](#) or other salicylate drugs and should never be given to kids under the age of 12.

## Pop Tylenol for stomach cramps

“Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is often recommended for the stomach flu, unless you have liver disease,” Dr. Sonpal notes, since it relieves aches, has fewer side effects than ibuprofen, and is less likely to irritate your stomach.

## If your stomach flu symptoms don't stop

If more than [four days have passed](#) and you're still experiencing the awful symptoms, call your doctor. This is especially true if you can't keep down any food

or water, are running a fever, have severe abdominal pain, or notice blood in your stool. If that's the case, "seek help immediately," says Dr. Pham.

When you do start feeling better, don't host a holiday party just yet. "Even after you recover from diarrhea and other symptoms, you can still pass [the stomach flu] on to others for 2 to 3 more weeks," Dr. Pham cautions. You'll continue to shed the virus through your stool during that period, so be extra cautious about washing your hands after you use the bathroom and before you handle any food.

<https://www.health.com/digestive-health/stomach-flu-remedies>