

**MSAD # 13 / RSU #83
Health Alert**

**Gastroenteritis
Notice to Parents
<Date>**

Gastroenteritis is a term used to describe a variety of 'stomach bugs'. Most of which are highly contagious. Norovirus (Norwalk-Like Viruses) are the most common cause of viral gastroenteritis. Other gastrointestinal illnesses include Campylobacteriosis, Cryptosporidiosis, E-coli, Giardiasis, Hepatitis A, Salmonellosis, and Shigellosis. There are many different strains of the viruses and most carry no persisting immunity after infection, so people can and do develop repeated similar illnesses, particularly during childhood. Treatment consists of supportive care, primarily fluid and electrolyte replacement. Depending on the illness medical treatment may be required.

Exposure to the viruses can result through direct contact with a person who is ill, as well consuming food or liquids that are prepared by an ill individual and through contact with surfaces or objects that have been contaminated by an ill individual. Viruses can live on surfaces for a prolonged period of time and at a wide range of temperatures. As with most illness, good and frequent hand washing is the most effective measure to help prevent contracting the viruses.

Symptoms include sudden onset of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and some stomach cramping. Additionally, some people have low-grade fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and lethargy.

The symptoms will usually resolve, without medical intervention, in about 1 to 3 days but could take 4 to 6 days in young children. Dehydration is the most common complication. Therefore, drinking plenty of liquids is very important. If symptoms persist or are severe your primary care provider should be contacted.

Contagion is very likely to continue for up to one day after the symptoms are gone. As a result, any ill individuals should remain home during the symptomatic period and for at least 24 hours after all symptoms resolve. If your child is sick during the day, please do not send them to school the next day even if they are feeling fine.

Please contact the school nurse, Mel Chadbourne, RN if you have any questions. More information is also available at the Maine CDC web site.