

Acute Gastroenteritis

Acute gastroenteritis is characterized by vomiting usually followed by frequent, loose, watery stools and abdominal cramping. It is sometimes accompanied by a fever and symptoms last two to five days. The incubation period is 24 to 72 hours. The period of communicability is during the acute stage and for a short time thereafter while the infectious agent is being excreted.

The protocol for responding to cases of acute gastroenteritis is as follows:

- 1. If a student shows any signs or symptoms of vomiting (two or more times), diarrhea (two or more loose stools requiring frequent trips to the bathroom), the child should be excluded from school in order to prevent the spread of disease to other students.***

When the child is symptom free for 24 hours and has resumed a normal diet without recurrence of symptoms, he/she may return to school.

References for information on this topic include the following:

School Health: Policy and Practice, American Academy of Pediatrics (2004), pp. 235-236.

State of Delaware, Department of Education, School Nursing: Technical Assistance Manual (Feb 2006), Section C, pp. 37-38.