

Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Camp Facilities

Prevention and Management



School Manual

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Control of Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Camp Facilities

In the event of a gastroenteritis outbreak, check that you have completed these vital steps.

- Identified all people experiencing nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea by doing a roll call and asking for symptoms each day.
- Immediately isolated people experiencing these symptoms.
- Collected samples of vomitus and/or diarrhoea from each person with symptoms and refrigerated these samples.
- Sought medical attention.
- Collected samples of food which may have been eaten in the past 3 days and kept them clearly labelled and separated from other food in the refrigerator.
- Notified the nearest Population Health Unit.
- Cleaned rooms/dormitories/tents of well people, followed by cleaning of all potentially contaminated areas.
- Arranged transportation for ill people and continuing to isolate people with symptoms from the remainder of the group.
- Distributed advisory letters to staff, students and visitors/volunteers.

Isolation of unwell people and good personal hygiene are very important.

Introduction

The following guidelines are designed to assist teachers or other supervisors of students in the prevention and management of gastroenteritis within a camp facility. These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with similar guidelines designed to assist the Camp Manager.

Gastroenteritis in a school camp environment can be caused by viral or bacterial infections.

Viral gastroenteritis

Viral gastroenteritis often causes large numbers of people to be affected in a short period of time because the viruses involved are highly infectious and pass very easily from person to person.

Bacterial gastroenteritis is less readily passed from person to person than viral gastroenteritis but large numbers of people may be affected if food or water becomes contaminated.

Viral gastroenteritis can be caused by many different kinds of viruses, with norovirus being the most common cause of vomiting and diarrhoea outbreaks in camp facilities. The main symptom of noroviral gastroenteritis is vomiting, which can be violent and profuse. Other symptoms may include diarrhoea, nausea, stomach cramps, fever, headache and muscle aches. It takes about 15 to 48 hours for symptoms to develop and the illness may last a few days. It generally settles without further problems; other than maintaining a good fluid intake there is no specific treatment required.

How is it spread?

Viral gastroenteritis is highly infectious. It can be spread by:

- person-to-person contact, from the germs on people's hands
- indirect contact from the soiled hands of an affected person to objects, surfaces, food or water and then to another person
- airborne means - when a person vomits, virus particles may pass into the air as an invisible mist and can be passed on to other people in the same room.

Someone with viral gastroenteritis is potentially infectious while they have the symptoms and for up to 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

Any student or staff member who has had nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea in the 48 hours prior to camp, should NOT attend the camp.

Bacterial gastroenteritis

Bacterial contamination of food or water is another common source of gastroenteritis outbreaks. Bacterial gastroenteritis is less readily passed from person to person than viral gastroenteritis but large numbers of people may be affected.

Symptoms of bacterial gastroenteritis can differ according to the particular bacteria, but in general can include fever, headache, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. Symptoms may present anywhere from 2 hours to 5 days after ingesting contaminated food or water and can last for several days.

As with viral gastroenteritis, treatment is primarily focused on maintaining good fluid intake. The use of antibiotics is usually reserved for the very young or very old and people with poor immune systems.

How is it spread?

Bacterial gastroenteritis can be spread through eating or drinking contaminated food or water, such as:

- untreated water that has been contaminated by animal or human faeces
- food that has been contaminated by animal or human faeces and then eaten raw or undercooked
- ready-to-eat food that has been contaminated by an infected food handler
- food that has been improperly stored or handled, enabling bacteria in the food to multiply.

Part 1: Prevention of Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Camp Facilities

The most important ways to prevent viral gastroenteritis outbreaks in camp facilities are routine effective hand washing and rapid isolation or exclusion of sick campers and/or staff when they become ill.

Prevention measures

1. Basic hygiene
2. Food safety
3. Screening and monitoring of campers and staff upon arrival at camp and throughout their stay
4. Exclusion/isolation/removal of sick campers and staff
5. Rapid access to additional staff and medical assistance in the event of an outbreak.

1. Basic hygiene

An important way to minimise the spread of gastroenteritis is to ensure you keep your hands away from your mouth.

Hand washing

Make hand washing an important part of the culture of the camp facility, emphasising to students and staff the importance of washing and **drying** of hands.

How to wash your hands

- Wet hands with water (not so hot that it might cause skin irritation), apply soap to hands and rub hands vigorously for at least 10 – 15 seconds. Pay particular attention to wash the palms and backs of hands, in between fingers, under finger nails and around wrists.
- Rinse hands and dry them thoroughly using disposable paper towel.
- Prevent hands from becoming sore or chapped by avoiding harsh cleansers and by drying hands thoroughly.

When to wash and dry your hands

- Before food preparation, handling and serving
- Before eating
- Before smoking
- After going to the toilet
- After contact with blood, faeces or vomit
- After handling garbage

Sharing of eating utensils and drink bottles/cups

- Do not share eating utensils or drink bottles/cups.
- Wash eating utensils and drink bottles/cups in hot soapy water, rinse and allow to air dry.

2. Food safety

The prevention of food-borne illness involves attention to hygiene, proper handling and preparation of food and care during food storage and distribution.

Food handlers should advise the Camp Manager if they have a disease likely to be transmitted through food, eg. gastroenteritis, hepatitis A or norovirus, and should not prepare, handle or serve food.

Getting ready for meals and snacks

- Before meals, ensure that tables have been cleaned.
- Wash and dry your hands before preparing or serving food. If you are interrupted during preparation and then return, wash and dry your hands before you continue.
- Check that all the students' hands are washed before they eat or drink.
- If students are serving themselves from the same container, they must be supervised. Utensils are to be used to prevent people from touching food that other people will eat.

Preparing food

Viruses do not grow in foods but can be passed from one person to another via food.

The food preparation area should have a hand basin with hot and cold water, soap and disposable towels so those who are preparing food can easily wash and dry their hands. Long hair should be tied back.

If you are involved in handling, preparing or serving food remember the basic points.

- Wash and dry your hands. Wearing jewellery will make it harder to clean your hands effectively and will require extra attention.
- If you have cuts or wounds on your hands make sure they are completely covered by an impermeable waterproof dressing. The use of disposable gloves over the dressing will provide an extra level of protection.

Prevent cross-contamination between raw and cooked foods

- Keep raw and cooked foods separate (even in the fridge).
- Do not store uncooked food above cooked food in the fridge.
- Use separate utensils (including cutting boards, knives etc) for raw and cooked food.
- Keep food hot (over 60°C) or keep food cold (5°C or less); otherwise don't keep it at all. (While the legal requirement for reheating food is 60°C, it is recommended that food should be reheated to 70°C for 2 minutes. Heating to this temperature will destroy bacteria that may have grown in the food. The best way of checking food temperatures is with a probe thermometer).
- Keep a non-mercury thermometer in your fridge so that you can check the temperature is 5°C or less.
- Reheat food once only.

The '4-hour/2-hour rule'

When food has not been stored under 5°C or over 60°C, the following advice (called the 4-hour/2-hour rule) should be followed regarding its safety.

- Ready-to-eat food that has been stored at temperatures between 5°C and 60°C for up to 2 hours must be refrigerated or used immediately. Do not reheat milk/formula.
- If ready-to-eat food has been stored between 5°C and 60°C for between 2 and 4 hours, it must be used immediately. If stored for a total of 4 hours or longer, it must be thrown out.

3. Screening and monitoring of students and staff upon arrival at camp and throughout their stay

This does not need to be a difficult or time-consuming exercise.

Before departing for camp, the health of all people should be established. Students should be advised that if they are unwell now **or at any time** during the camp, they should inform the Camp Manager, supervisor or teacher (whichever is appropriate). Early isolation of people with symptoms of nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea is of paramount importance if an outbreak is to be avoided.

In addition, the Camp Manager, supervisors or teachers should make informal enquiries regarding students' health on a regular basis (eg. each meal time).

4. Exclusion/isolation/removal of sick students and staff

- People with vomiting or diarrhoea should be excluded or isolated from the camp until at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped, ie. they have not had a loose bowel action or vomited for at least 48 hours.
- Food handlers should be excluded from food preparation until at least 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped. Large outbreaks have occurred when food handlers have returned to preparing food prior to 2 days after the symptoms have stopped (while still infectious).
- People who are sick should be kept away from public areas and from those not infected.
- Food handlers and other staff should **not** resume duties until 48 hours after symptoms have ceased.

5. Accessing more staff or medical assistance if there is an outbreak

- Ensure staff have fully charged mobile phones with them whilst on camp.
- Staff also need a list of contact emergency numbers eg. school principal, school registrar etc.
- Camp Facility should have contact phone numbers handy for ambulance, local hospital, local doctor and Population Health Unit (see page 14).
- Ensure first aid kits include gloves, disposable aprons and cleaning solutions and equipment (see Part 2, Section 5 for details).

Part 2: Management of Gastroenteritis Outbreaks in Camp Facilities

Management includes:

1. early identification of all affected people
2. isolation of affected people
3. collection of laboratory samples
4. notification to Population Health Unit
5. cleaning of the facility
6. seeking medical attention
7. transportation to medical care and/or home
8. advice to staff, campers and visitors/volunteers on management of sick people and prevention of further cases.

1. Early identification of all affected people

The early identification and management of a person or group of people experiencing nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea is of paramount importance if an outbreak is to be avoided.

2. Isolation of affected people

To minimise the risk of spread of this illness, people with symptoms of gastroenteritis should be separated from the rest of the group.

Ideally, arrangements should be made to transport these affected people home as soon as possible. If this is not possible these people should be isolated from the rest of the group. They should have separate bathroom and toilet from the rest of the group. This bathroom and toilet should be signed to ensure that non-affected people do not use it. Non-affected people should be discouraged from visiting the people who are unwell.

3. Collection of laboratory samples

It is important to identify the cause of the gastroenteritis as soon as possible:

- Samples of **diarrhoea and/or vomit** need to be obtained from all new cases until samples from 6 affected people have been collected.
- Collect and refrigerate **all available food** eaten during the 72 hours before onset of illness if possible (do not freeze).
- Save or retrieve **original containers or packages**.
- Save any water in refrigerator and trays of ice cubes in freezer; collect water sample from suspect supply in clean jar; put on lid and refrigerate.

These samples should be collected in a sealed container, labelled with the person's name, date of birth and the collection date. The sealed container should be clearly labelled and placed in a plastic bag and kept in the fridge (not the freezer), separated from other food, until collected by Population Health Unit staff.

Record details of specimens on the appropriate form (page 15). Specimens submitted to pathology companies are currently not tested for viral infections unless a specific request is made. A specimen collection form needs to be completed to accompany the specimens to the laboratory and needs to specify that viral testing, as well as bacterial, should be done. When the Population Health Unit is notified, they can give advice on collecting and transporting samples.

4. Notification to Population Health Unit

Please notify the Population Health Unit (contact numbers on page 14) of preliminary details, such as:

- how many students and staff are present; how many people are affected; how many are students and/or staff

- symptoms eg. vomiting, nausea, diarrhoea, fevers
- when symptoms began
- whether any people have been waiting for or are receiving medical treatment and if so, what sort of treatment
- whether anyone has gone to a hospital or been hospitalised
- details of catering arrangements, including menus, and whether the catering was provided onsite
- source of drinking water exposure eg. tap, tank, bottled
- other water exposure eg. swimming pools, lakes, dams
- whether faecal or vomitus samples have been taken.

Begin documentation by using the *Gastroenteritis Outbreak Notification* form (page 12). The Population Health Unit can assist with information regarding gastrointestinal outbreaks in mass gatherings, sampling of food and water, providing guidelines for cleaning of the facility, provision of sample collection kits for faeces and vomit and transportation of samples for testing.

5. Cleaning of the facility

- All people cleaning infectious areas should use gloves and wear a plastic disposable apron, or other single use outer garment covering if an apron is not available.
- All rooms/dormitories/tents of symptom-free students should be cleaned first.
- All potentially contaminated areas need to be cleaned initially with hot water and detergent and then disinfected.
- These areas include: toilets, showers, chairs, floors, handles, phones and any surface exposed to hand contact.
- Prepare a disinfectant solution with either Milton Anti-bacterial Solution mixed at a ratio of 50/50 with water (5000ppm), or freshly constituted household bleach at a 1:10 dilution.
- Use a spray-bottle for small surfaces and a mop and bucket for larger surfaces.
- Detachable mop heads should be laundered in a hot wash and left to air dry after use.
- Bathrooms/toilets should be cleaned twice daily and when visibly dirty.
- Soiled carpets should be cleaned with detergent and then steam-cleaned.
- Soft furnishings or metal surfaces which might be damaged by using the disinfectant solution should be cleaned thoroughly with detergent and then left to dry.

Cleaning up vomit and faeces

- Spills should be attended to immediately.
- Wear gloves and a plastic apron.
- Use paper towels to soak up excess liquid and place in plastic bag.
- Clean the soiled area with detergent and hot water using a disposable cloth.

- Disinfect the soiled area with the freshly made disinfectant solution as described above.
- Place clothes and linen in plastic bag. If laundering onsite, ensure a hot wash cycle is used. If sending soiled laundry off-site, ensure the people doing the laundry are aware they are dealing with contaminated laundry.
- Wash and dry hands thoroughly.
- Close the area for at least one hour.

6. Seeking medical attention

If any affected person or group of people requires medical treatment, telephone ahead and inform the ambulance, hospital or General Practitioner that you are coming from a camp with one or more cases of gastroenteritis.

If a medical practitioner is visiting the camp, ensure there are adequate hand washing facilities so they may wash hands before seeing people, in between seeing people and when they leave.

7. Transportation to medical care and/or home

Transporting affected people **to** a health care facility:

- If there is private transport available from the campsite to the medical facility, ensure there is a bowl/bucket handy.
- If an ambulance is required, inform them that you are coming from a camp with one or more cases of gastroenteritis.

Transporting affected people **from** a health care facility back to camp:

- This is **not** recommended due to the risk of exposing unaffected people back at the camp. If there is no alternative and the person **must** return to camp, minimise the number of unaffected people in the vehicle and ensure the person is effectively isolated when they return (see recommendations on 'isolation' on page 7).

Transporting affected people **from** a health care facility back to their home:

- If a small number of people are affected and need to return home, try to arrange for private transport for all affected people as a group.

Transporting affected and unaffected people **from** a health care facility back to their home:

- Try to separate affected and unaffected people from travelling together. This may necessitate using another bus or making an extra journey.

8. Advice for staff, students and visitors/volunteers on management of sick people and prevention of further cases

The following forms and fact sheets are designed to enable the camp facility to readily provide campers with consistent, factual information during the event of a gastrointestinal outbreak.

Part 3: Forms, Fact Sheets and Letters

- The *Gastroenteritis Outbreak Notification* form (page 12) is to be completed as soon as possible after the first person shows signs of gastroenteritis. The Population Health Unit is to be notified at this time (contact numbers are on page 14). The notification form is to be handed to a Population Health Officer upon their arrival at the Camp Facility.
- The *Specimen Collection Form* (page 15) is to be used if an outbreak occurs. Please record name, date of birth, sample type and collection time of sample on the form. This form is also to be handed to a Population Health Officer upon their arrival at the Camp Facility.
- The *Collecting a Faecal Sample* fact sheet (page 16) is to ensure correct specimen collection, minimising risk to others.
- The *Letter to parent/s* (page 17) is to be sent home with the student following a gastrointestinal outbreak at a Camp Facility.
- The *Advice for Students* fact sheet (page 18) is to accompany the letter to the parent. The fact sheet outlines advice to prevent further spread of disease at home.

Gastroenteritis Outbreak Notification

This form is to be used as soon as possible after a second person shows signs of gastroenteritis. It should be either faxed to the Population Health Unit (contact numbers on page 14) or handed to a Population Health Officer upon their arrival at the Camp Facility.

Contact

Name and position of person notifying of illness.....

Contact phone no. Mobile.....Landline.....

Name of school involved.....

Name of Camp Facility

Address

Contact phone no.Fax no.

When did the group arrive at the camp? Date.....Time.....

Symptoms

Total number of students and staff at camp Students.....Staff.....

Date and time of **first** person with symptoms.....

Name

Date and time of **second** person with symptoms.....

Name

Date and time of **last** person with symptoms.....

Name

Number of people with symptoms Students.....Staff.....

Number of people with diarrhoea only Students.....Staff.....

Number of people with vomiting only Students.....Staff.....

Number of people with both diarrhoea & vomiting Students.....Staff.....

Total number of people with symptoms Students.....Staff.....

Are the symptomatic people isolated/separated
from rest of group? Yes No

Has anybody been seen by a doctor? Yes No

If yes, name of doctor.....Phone no.

Has anybody been transferred to hospital? Yes No

If yes, how many?..... Name of Hospital.....

Have any samples of vomit or diarrhoea been collected? Yes No

History

Common food consumption for past 3 days prior to onset of illness

(eg. set menus at Camp, fast food outlets on way to camp, meals packed by school prior to Camp)

	Places where food eaten	Foods consumed
Day 1 before onset		
Day 2 before onset		
Day 3 before onset		

If menus are available, please attach

Common water consumption for past 3 days prior to onset of illness

Day 1 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottled <input type="checkbox"/> Bore	<input type="checkbox"/> Town supply <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Rainwater tank <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Day 2 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottled <input type="checkbox"/> Bore	<input type="checkbox"/> Town supply <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Rainwater tank <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Day 3 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Bottled <input type="checkbox"/> Bore	<input type="checkbox"/> Town supply <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Rainwater tank <input type="checkbox"/> Other

Recreational water contact for last 3 days prior to onset of illness

Day 1 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Slides <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Theme Parks <input type="checkbox"/> Spa
Day 2 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Slides <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Theme Parks <input type="checkbox"/> Spa
Day 3 before onset	<input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool <input type="checkbox"/> Stream, river, dam, lake, etc	<input type="checkbox"/> Water Slides <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Theme Parks <input type="checkbox"/> Spa

Any animal contact for last 3 days prior to onset of illness? Yes No

Details.....

Did the campers have direct contact with the animal? Yes No

Details.....

Population Health Unit Contact Numbers

Population Health Unit	Phone (07)	Fax (07)
Brisbane Northside	3624 1104	3624 1199
Brisbane Southside	3000 9148	3000 9130
Bundaberg	4150 2780	4150 2729
Cairns	4050 3600	4031 1440
Darling Downs	4631 9888	4639 4772
Gold Coast	5509 7222	5561 1851
Mackay	4986 6611	4986 6610
Mt Isa	4744 4846	4745 4573
Rockhampton	4920 6989	4920 6855
Sunshine Coast	5479 4655	5443 5488
Townsville	4753 9000	4753 9001
Wide Bay	4120 6000	4120 6016

Specimen Collection Form

Name of Camp Facility _____

Contact Person _____

Contact Number/s _____

No	Given Name	Surname	Date of Birth	Specimen Type eg. faeces/vomit	Collection		Comments
					Date	Time	
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Collecting a Faecal Sample

Step 1

Write on the label:

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- Your gender
- The date and time you collected the sample.



Step 2

Use one of these methods to collect some of your faeces for testing.

Hold a clean
disposable
plastic container
underneath

OR

Hold a clean plastic
bag underneath

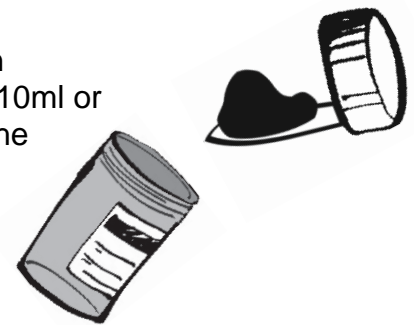
OR

Stretch clean, new
cling-wrap across
the toilet so it sags
in the middle



Step 3

- Use the scoop inside the lid of the container or a clean disposable spatula to transfer a small amount (eg 5 – 10ml or an amount similar to a cherry or marble) of faeces to the container.
- Screw on the lid and wash your hands.
- Place container inside plastic bag.
- Place plastic bag inside white bag.
- Keep the sample in a cool place (in a cooler or fridge).
- Store away from food.



Important

- Keep the faeces sample free from urine if possible.
- If blood or mucus is present in the faeces, some should be included in the sample.
- When you have transferred the sample to the container, dispose of the materials you used to collect it by wrapping in newspaper and putting in the rubbish immediately.
- Wash your hands.
- Place sample in a cooler with icepacks or refrigerate AWAY from food.

Letter to parent/s



..... Population Health Unit

Phone.

(Date)

Dear Parent

Please find attached information regarding a gastroenteritis outbreak that occurred at _____ camp.

The following advice is provided for schools involved with the camp outbreak.

1. All students/staff who have been sick with gastroenteritis should stay away from school, and may return to school on _____.
2. All other students/staff who have not been ill should stay away from school tomorrow _____, and should return to school on _____ as long as they have remained well in the interim.
3. Any students/staff attending the camp that may develop gastroenteritis symptoms over the next few days should stay away from school until they have been symptom free for 48 hours.
4. Other school activities should continue as usual.

If you require further information, please contact the above Population Health Unit.

Yours sincerely

(name)

Public Health Medical Officer

Advice for Students

Outbreak of Viral Gastroenteritis in a Camp Facility

This is to advise you that several students and/or staff of the camp facility have become sick with 'gastroenteritis' (nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhoea).

The Population Health Unit has advised that the suspected cause is a virus.

Viral gastroenteritis often causes large numbers of people to be affected in a short period of time because the viruses involved are highly infectious and pass very easily from person to person.

Bacterial gastroenteritis is less readily passed from person to person than viral gastroenteritis, but large numbers of people may be affected if food or water becomes contaminated.

The illness may last a day or two and it generally settles without further problems, but it can be a serious illness for the very young or the elderly. There is generally no specific treatment other than maintaining a good fluid intake.

Symptoms of viral gastroenteritis

Viral gastroenteritis is caused by many different kinds of viruses, with norovirus being the most common cause of vomiting and diarrhoea outbreaks in camp facilities. The main symptom of noroviral gastroenteritis is vomiting, which can be violent and profuse. Other symptoms may include diarrhoea, nausea, stomach cramps, fever, headache and muscle aches. It takes about 15 to 48 hours for symptoms to develop and the illness may last a few days. It generally settles without further problems. Other than maintaining a good fluid intake there is no specific treatment

Someone with viral gastroenteritis is potentially infectious while they have the symptoms and for up to 48 hours after the symptoms have stopped.

How viral gastroenteritis is spread

Viral gastroenteritis is highly infectious. It can be spread by:

- person-to-person contact, from the germs being on people's hands
- indirect contact from the soiled hands an affected person to objects, surfaces, food or water and then to another person
- swallowing something that has been contaminated through contact with infected vomit or faeces
- person to person contact

- airborne spread - when a person vomits, virus particles may pass into the air as an invisible mist and can be passed on to other people in the same room.

Recommendations by the Population Health Unit

- Ensure high levels of personal hygiene, particularly thorough hand washing:
 - Wet hands with water (not so hot that it might cause skin irritation), apply soap to hands and rub hands vigorously for at least 10–15 seconds. Pay particular attention to wash the palms and backs of hands, in between fingers, under finger nails and around wrists.
 - Rinse hands and dry them thoroughly using paper towels.
 - Prevent hands from becoming sore or chapped by avoiding harsh cleansers and by drying hands thoroughly.
- Do not share drink bottles/cups or eating utensils.
- Please avoid contact with people who are sick with this illness.
- If you become sick and feel like vomiting while you are in a public place such as eating areas, try to leave the area as soon as possible. If you are unable to make it to a bathroom, go outside to be sick. This will reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.
- Avoid contact with other people until all your symptoms have completely gone.