

How to Feel Better When Food Poisoning Leaves You a Pooping, Puking Mess

And when you have to call your doctor

BY SUZANNAH WEISS JANUARY 19, 2018

We've all been there: Those leftovers looked (and, er, smelled) a little bit iffy in your fridge, but you didn't feel like cooking something new. So, you gave them a half-hearted nuke in the microwave, and chowed down—only to find yourself rushing to the bathroom a few hours later.

Food poisoning—the term used to describe the gastrointestinal symptoms you experience after eating contaminated food—can be brutal. But thankfully, there are a few ways you can get through it quicker.

First, there are two kinds of food poisoning: bacterial and viral, says Gina Sam, M.D., director of the Institute of Gastrointestinal Motility Disorders and Integrative Health. Symptoms of food poisoning vary depending on the offending bug, but can include things like nausea, vomiting, watery or bloody diarrhea, and abdominal pain or cramping.

Usually, the cause is viral: Bugs like norovirus or rotavirus, which are often found on raw produce or spread by a food handler who is sick, get better on their own. If you have bacterial food poisoning like *Salmonella* (like through contaminated poultry) or *E.coli* (say, through contaminated beef), you'll need antibiotics. In that case, you'll likely experience symptoms like fever and chills, too.

Whatever the cause may be, there are some home remedies for food poisoning that can make you feel better. Hydration is key. Since you're losing electrolytes as well with your diarrhea, drinks like Gatorade can help restore them, says **Dr. Sam**.

Once you're able to keep liquids down, you can eat, but stick with bland foods like bread, rice, and bananas that won't upset your stomach more, says Beverly Hills Concierge doctor Ehsan Ali, M.D. Avoid dairy, alcohol, and anything fatty, fried, heavy, or spicy. These can irritate your stomach and make vomiting and diarrhea worse.

Most of your symptoms should clear up within three days, and after that, you can reintroduce all foods and drinks, says **Dr. Sam**, not just the bland stuff. Your poop might take up to a week to return to normal (meaning you may still experience looser stool than usual) but probiotics can aid in that process.

In the meantime, you can use medications like Zofran to treat the vomiting and Imodium for the diarrhea, says Dr. Ali (Here's **why drinking gives you diarrhea**).

But if you don't feel better within three days, see a doctor. You're likely dealing with bacterial food poisoning and will need an antibiotic prescription.