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GASTROINTESTINAL (GI) ILLNESS **FACT SHEET**

The DuPage County Health Department is recommending increased awareness and actions to help control and prevent the spread of gastrointestinal (GI) illness, toward keeping our community safe and healthy. GI illness, often confused with the “flu” or “stomach flu,” is common year round--especially during fall, winter, and spring months.

Symptoms of GI illness include vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain. Most people will experience a mild illness and get better within 1 to 3 days, though illness can lead to dehydration, especially in young children, older adults, and people with other underlying conditions.

All persons can decrease their chance of coming in contact with gastrointestinal illness by following these preventive steps:

- **Frequently wash your hands with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom and before eating, preparing, or handling food.** Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds (hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice). Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used in addition to hand washing, but they should not be used as a substitute for washing with soap and water.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect contaminated surfaces immediately after an episode of diarrhea or vomiting by using a bleach-based household cleaner. If using liquid household bleach prepared daily, one part bleach to nine parts water (1:10 dilution, or 2/3 cup bleach to 1 gallon of water) is recommended.
- Immediately remove and wash clothing or linens that may be contaminated with feces or vomitus (use hot water and soap).
- Flush or discard any vomitus and/or stool in the toilet and make sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.
- Carefully wash fruits and vegetables, and steam oysters before eating them.

If you or your child are sick or have experienced symptoms of gastrointestinal illness and/or dehydration, please follow these precautions:

- **Contact your physician for evaluation and appropriate treatment.**
- Refrain from food preparation while you have symptoms and for 48 hours after recovery from illness.
- To prevent dehydration, drink plenty of liquids to replace fluids that are lost from vomiting and diarrhea.
- **Persons with GI illness should not return to work, school, day care, or public gatherings until they are free of symptoms for 24 hours.**

If you or your physician has any further questions, please contact the DuPage County Health Department at (630) 221-7553. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

3/10/15

Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday