



Dr Wolfgang Muller (Consultant Paediatrician)

Parent Information Guide:

Astrovirus Gastroenteritis in Children and Young People

What is Astrovirus Gastroenteritis?

Astrovirus is a **virus that causes stomach and intestinal infection**, known as gastroenteritis. It most commonly affects **young children under the age of 5**. While it is generally **mild**, it can cause unpleasant symptoms like diarrhoea and stomach pain.

How Does it Spread?

Astrovirus spreads through the **faecal–oral route**, which means the virus can be passed from an infected person's stool to another person's mouth through:

- Unwashed hands
- Contaminated surfaces (e.g. toys, toilets)
- Food or water that has come into contact with the virus

The virus is **highly contagious** in households, nurseries, and schools.

What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms usually begin **3–4 days after exposure** and can include:

- **Watery diarrhoea** (most common)
- **Mild fever**
- **Stomach pain or cramps**
- **Nausea or occasional vomiting**
- Tiredness or irritability

Symptoms usually last **2–4 days**, and most children recover fully with rest and fluids.



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How is it Treated?

There is **no specific medicine** to treat astrovirus. Treatment is mainly **supportive**:

✅ Encourage your child to **drink plenty of fluids** – small sips often ✅ Use **oral rehydration solutions** (from pharmacies) if diarrhoea is heavy ✅ **Continue breastfeeding or feeding** as usual ✅ Offer bland, easy-to-digest foods if your child is eating

See a doctor if your child:

- Shows signs of **dehydration** (dry mouth, sunken eyes, low urine)
- Has **bloody diarrhoea**
- Is **vomiting repeatedly** or unable to keep fluids down
- Has a high or persistent fever
- Is very drowsy or unresponsive

Can It Be Prevented?

You can help prevent the spread of astrovirus by:

- **Washing hands** thoroughly with soap and water (especially after nappy changes and before meals)
- **Cleaning toys and surfaces** regularly
- **Keeping sick children at home** until at least 48 hours after the diarrhoea stops
- Avoiding shared towels or cups during illness

Is There a Vaccine?

Currently, **there is no vaccine** for astrovirus.

Key Points to Remember

- Astrovirus is a **common and usually mild** cause of diarrhoea in children
- **Fluids and rest** are the main treatment
- Practise **good hygiene** to prevent it spreading to others

If you have concerns, contact your GP or NHS 111 for further advice.



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Enclosed is a link to further parent information:

Parent information on “My child is unwell – When should I see a doctor?”

<https://drwmuller.com/information-for-parents-carers/>

See: Emergencies: “When do I need to see a doctor urgently?”

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