

DIARRHOEA

What is diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is where you frequently pass watery or loose poo. Some people may also have other symptoms, depending on the cause.

It affects most people from time to time and is usually nothing to worry about. However, it can be distressing and unpleasant until it passes, which normally takes a few days to a week.

Preventing diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is often caused by an infection. You can reduce your risk by making sure you maintain high standards of hygiene.

For example, you should:

- wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water after going to the toilet and before eating or preparing food
- clean the toilet, including the handle and the seat, with disinfectant after each bout of diarrhoea
- avoid sharing towels, flannels, cutlery or utensils with others
- wash soiled clothing and bed linen separately from other clothes and at the highest temperature possible – for example, 60C or higher for linen – after first removing any poo into the toilet
- avoid returning to work or school until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea

Treatment for diarrhoea

Most cases of diarrhoea clear up after a few days without treatment. However, diarrhoea can lead to dehydration, so you should drink plenty of fluids – frequent small sips of water – until it passes.

It's very important that babies and small children don't become dehydrated. Your pharmacist may suggest you use an oral rehydration solution (ORS) if you or your child are particularly at risk of dehydration.

You should eat solid food as soon as you feel able to. If you're breastfeeding or bottle feeding your baby and they have diarrhoea, you should try to feed them as normal.

Stay at home until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea to prevent spreading any infection to others.

More information about diarrhoea can be found at www.nhs.uk