
SELF-CARE INFORMATION FOR DIARRHOEA IN ADULTS

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

When this condition comes on suddenly, the cause is most often viral or infective. Most people will suffer from an infective diarrhoea at some point, and this is usually nothing to worry about. It can however be distressing and unpleasant until it passes, which normally takes a few days to a week.

When you have diarrhoea caused by a stomach bug, you could be infectious to others. You're most infectious from when the symptoms start until 2 days after they've passed. *So, stay off work until you have been clear of any symptoms for 48 hours.*

Managing your condition

Prevention

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
- *Hot wash soiled linens*- clothing and bed linen should be washed *separately* from other clothes and at the highest temperature possible – for example, 60°C or higher for linen – after first removing any poo into the toilet
- *Avoid returning to work until at least 48 hours* after the last episode of diarrhoea to avoid spread

Treatment

Most cases of diarrhoea clear up after a few days without treatment; however, diarrhoea can lead to dehydration, so to avoid this by considering:

- **Hydration** - Drink plenty of fluids. Frequent small sips of water until symptoms stop.
- **Oral Rehydration Solutions** - Your pharmacist may suggest using if you are particularly at risk of dehydration. These replace lost fluids along with electrolytes. e.g. Dioralyte
- **Medicines** – These medicines can stop diarrhoea for a few hours (e.g. Loperamide/Imodium). Antidiarrheals are not suitable for young children. We only recommend these for occasional use and specific reasons- for example, if you must go out and are away from a toilet. The quickest

way to clear the infection is to avoid these medications and to stay at home by the toilet and keep hydrated.

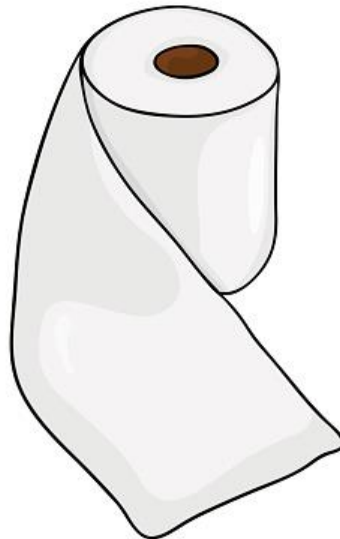
- **Eating** - You can eat solid food as soon as you feel able to. Not having anything too spicy, fatty or sugary initially may be easier. If you're breastfeeding or bottle feeding your baby and they have diarrhoea, you should try to feed them as normal.
- **Stay at home** – to prevent spreading any infection to others, stay home until at least 48 hours after the last episode of diarrhoea.
- **Speak to your pharmacist** - for advice if you're not sure which type of medicine is best for you and your symptoms.

When to seek advice

It is advisable to seek further advice if you notice any of the following:

- You are still dehydrated despite using oral rehydration sachets
- Have bloody diarrhoea or bleeding from your bottom
- Have green or yellow vomit or have frequent uncontrolled vomiting
- Have diarrhoea for more than 7 days or vomiting for more than 2 days
- You have high fevers >38 degrees C, not coming down with paracetamol
- If you are on multiple medications, or are receiving cancer treatments

If you have kidney disease, please see leaflet "kidney disease and Acute illness" on our website.



Useful contacts

- Ask your pharmacist
- NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk
- Patient UK - www.patient.co.uk

If you have further questions:

Call the **practice** on *01285653184* or *01285653122*

If you require **urgent** medical advice overnight call *111*

In an **emergency** call *999*