

What is diarrhea?

A person is considered to have diarrhea when their bowel movements are more watery or happen more often than is typical for that person's usual pattern. Other symptoms may often accompany diarrhea, such as fever*, vomiting, stomach pain, and loss of appetite.

What causes diarrhea?

Many different things can cause diarrhea. Germs, such as viruses, bacteria, and parasites, can cause diarrhea. Sometimes a person can have diarrhea without being contagious, such as when diarrhea is caused by certain medications, food allergies or additives, diet changes or certain chronic diseases.

Can diarrhea be passed from one person to another?

When diarrhea is caused by a germ, the illness can be spread to other people if the germ gets into the body through the mouth. Germs causing diarrhea can be spread through food, water or an object that is contaminated. This occurs when a person accidentally puts something that is contaminated in his/her mouth. Washing hands properly and sanitizing surfaces whenever changing diapers or helping a child use the toilet can minimize spread, as diapering/toileting is a common risk for spreading diarrheal illnesses.

Who is at risk for diarrhea?

Anyone can get diarrhea.

How is diarrhea treated?

The key to deciding how to treat diarrhea lies in determining the cause of the diarrhea. Diagnosing the cause of diarrhea can be difficult and sometimes requires repeated stool samples, but this generally only happens if diarrhea persists longer than usual. If the diarrhea is caused by bacteria, sometimes an antibiotic can be used to treat it. Other causes of diarrhea, such as viruses, have no specific treatments and only general comfort measures are recommended. To help prevent dehydration, make sure to drink plenty of fluids.

How can the spread of diarrhea be reduced?

- Make sure that both children and adults follow good handwashing practices. Wash hands especially well after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and helping children use the toilet. Supervise and assist children when they wash their hands after toileting or diapering.
- Make sure hands are washed particularly well before preparing, serving, or eating food.
- Use a **sanitizing** solution to help minimize germs on surfaces such as tabletops, counters, and toys.
- Use a **disinfecting** solution for diaper changing pads, toilet areas, and bathroom surfaces.
- Child care staff should consult with the Child Care Health Outreach program at 425.252.5415 for additional recommendations on cleaning, sanitizing and illness prevention.

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Child Care Health Outreach Program

3020 Rucker Avenue, Suite 104 ■ Everett, WA 98201-3900 ■ www.snohd.org ■ tel: 425.252.5415

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the primary ways to stop the spread of disease. The following steps are recommended for good handwashing:

1. Turn on water (cool or warm water is acceptable.)
2. Apply soap to hands.
3. Rub soap over tops and palms of hands and around fingernails. Scrub hands for approximately 20 seconds.
4. Rinse hands with running water.
5. Dry hands with a clean, disposable towel.
6. Repeat the process if preparing foods.

Exclude from group setting?

Any person who has 2 stools more than their normal pattern within a 24 hour period needs to be excluded from the child care or school setting. If the cause of diarrhea is from a chronic illness of a non-infectious nature, then an individual care plan is required with signature from a health professional, and consultation with a child care health consultant is recommended.

* Fever is defined as a temperature above 101°F (38.3°C) by any method or above 100.4°F (38.0°C) for infants younger than 2 months old.

Reference:

American Academy of Pediatrics

- Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, 4th ed

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