

Diarrhea

What is it?

Diarrhea is a condition in which watery or un-formed (loose) stools occur more often than normal. Diarrhea can be caused by

- New, unusual, or spicy foods
- Certain medications
- Viruses, bacteria, or parasites

How is diarrhea spread?

- Consuming food or liquids contaminated with bacteria or viruses
- Touching contaminated surfaces and then placing your fingers in your mouth
- Having direct contact with a person who has diarrhea or with their stool



Symptoms

- Frequent loose or watery stools
- Sometimes stomach cramps or tenderness and fever



Who is at risk for severe illness?

Sometimes people with diarrhea can't drink enough liquid to replace fluid lost in their stool. They can become dehydrated and may need medical care. This is more common among:

- Very young children
- Older people
- People with weakened immune systems

When sick

- Stay home for at least 24 hours after feeling better
- See a healthcare provider if symptoms last more than 2 days or get worse
- Watch for dehydration symptoms: fatigue, dry mouth and throat, dizziness, decreased urination (less pee)

Ways to prevent infectious diarrhea

- Wash hands often, especially after using the toilet and changing diapers and before eating or preparing food
- Do not prepare or serve food until 3 days after feeling better
- Dispose of food that may have been contaminated by a sick person



Learn more
about diarrhea