

DIARRHEA (INFECTIOUS)

Diarrhea is an increased number of stools (compared with a person's normal pattern), along with decreased stool form or watery, bloody, and/or mucus-containing stools. Diarrhea often is a symptom of infection caused by germs such as bacteria, parasites, or viruses.

CAUSE	Many bacteria, parasites, and viruses can cause diarrhea. Some examples are: Bacteria: <i>Salmonella</i> , <i>Shigella</i> , <i>Campylobacter</i> , <i>E. coli</i> O157:H7 Parasites: <i>Giardia</i> , <i>Cryptosporidium</i> , <i>Cyclospora</i> Viruses: Norovirus (Norwalk-like), rotavirus, enterovirus
SYMPTOMS	In addition to diarrhea, there may be blood and mucus in the stool. Other symptoms may include nausea, stomach pain, vomiting, and fever.
SPREAD	Infectious germs leave the body through the stool of an infected person and enter another person when hands, food, or objects (such as toys) contaminated with stool are placed in the mouth. Spread can occur when people do not wash their hands after using the toilet or changing diapers. Spread can occur whether or not a person feels sick.
INCUBATION	Varies by germ. It may take from 1 day to 4 weeks (sometimes longer) from the time a person is exposed until symptoms start.
CONTAGIOUS PERIOD	As long as infectious germs are present in the stool, a person can pass the germs on to other people.
EXCLUSION	<u>Childcare</u> : Until diarrhea has stopped. The length of time may vary depending on the germ. For some infections, the person must also be treated with antibiotics or have negative stool tests before returning to childcare. (See fact sheet for specific organism when known.) <u>School</u> : None, unless the child is not feeling well and/or has diarrhea and needs to use the bathroom frequently. Exclusion may be necessary during outbreaks. Everyone with diarrhea should not use swimming beaches, pools, spas, water parks, or hot tubs for at least 72 hours after diarrhea has stopped. Staff with diarrhea may be restricted from working in food service. Call your local health department to see if these restrictions apply.
DIAGNOSIS	Recommend parents/guardians call their healthcare provider if their child has symptoms. A lab test (stool exam or culture) may be done to determine the cause.
TREATMENT	Treatment will depend on which germ is present. Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to dehydration, which may be a medical emergency. Ask a healthcare provider how to prevent dehydration.
PREVENTION/CONTROL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wash hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water after using the toilet and changing diapers and before preparing or eating food. Thorough handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Staff should closely monitor handwashing of all children after children have used the bathroom or have been diapered.

DIARRHEA (INFECTIONS)

PREVENTION/CONTROL (CONTINUED)

- Clean and disinfect diapering area and potty chairs after each use and bathroom toilets, sinks, and toys at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)
- Clean and sanitize mouthed toys, objects and surfaces at least daily and when soiled. (See pgs 34-36.)

For more information, call Hennepin County HSPHD-Epidemiology at (612) 543-5230 or call your local health department.