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# Factsheet on Diarrhoea & Vomiting

## Diarrhoea & Vomiting (D&V)

Diarrhoea is unexpected episodes of loose or watery bowel movements that are more frequent than normal.

There are many reasons why people experience symptoms of D&V, including:

- taking certain medications
- infections with bacteria, viruses or parasites

## What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment for D&V, however people with D&V are at increased risk of becoming dehydrated, therefore it is recommended to drink plenty of fluids. In some cases your GP may prescribe medicine to prevent you becoming dehydrated.

Your GP may request a sample from you if your symptoms persist, or if there is blood present in your diarrhoea.

If you have a hospital or healthcare appointment speak to them prior to attending and they will advise you.

## Is it necessary to stay off work, school or nursery?

Yes, until you have been free from any symptoms for at least 48 hours.

All D&V should be regarded as potentially infectious until 48 hours after the person is free from symptoms.

In some instances, where your doctor has identified the specific cause for your illness, you may be required to stay off work, school or nursery for longer than 48 hours and the above general guidance may not apply.

If you or a family/household member is affected by D&V:

- do not prepare food if at all possible until you have been symptom free for 48 hours
- do not go to work, school or nursery until you have been symptom free for 48 hours
- do not visit hospitals or other health care establishments until you have been symptom free for 48 hours

## How do you prevent the spread of D&V?

Good general personal and domestic cleanliness is important in helping prevent the spread of infection.

Handwashing is the most important way to stop the spread of infection. Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm running water and liquid soap and dry thoroughly:

- after using or cleaning the toilet
- before eating, preparing or serving food/drink
- after attending to another person who has diarrhoea/vomiting
- after changing a baby's nappy
- after handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding
- when your hands have been contaminated with any bodily fluids

Ensure each person affected has an individual towel for drying their hands. Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

When washing soiled linen, the following advice is applicable:

- for any items/clothes soiled with faeces or vomit, any 'solids' should be carefully put down the toilet and flushed away
- soiled linen should be washed separately in the washing machine using a pre-wash if possible and on the hottest temperature possible for the fabric
- use a biological washing powder whenever possible
- do not overload the washing machine
- wipe down the outside surface of the washing machine after loading with hot soapy water and a disposable cloth
- you may wish to run an empty hot (90°C) cycle to 'wash through' your machine if you have washed heavily soiled items

When cleaning, pay particular attention to the toilet bowl and seat (surface and underneath) as well as taps, flush handles and surrounding area and surfaces that may have been contaminated by germs.

Clean toilet seats, flush handles, basins and taps more frequently than normal with warm soapy water. The toilet bowl should be cleaned with a toilet brush and disinfectant. Wear rubber gloves to clean the toilet and keep them for this purpose only.

If you are using a disinfectant, ensure that it conforms to a British Standard and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Keep all chemical cleaning agents in a safe place away from children.

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This factsheet has been reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team from the North West.

Further advice may be obtained from Cumbria and Lancashire Public Health England Centre. Telephone 0844 225 0602