

SUFFERING FROM FOOD POISONING OR DIARRHOEA?

Advice for people suffering with food poisoning or diarrhoea:



What causes it and how does it spread?

If you are suffering from diarrhoea and/or vomiting or in contact with a sufferer, it is important that you read this leaflet.

If you work with food or the young or the elderly, please also read the appropriate section on the back page.

This advice is produced by North Devon District Council's Environmental Health & Housing Services' Officers in consultation with other local authorities, local doctors and the Devon Health Protection Team (01803 861833).

Local Environmental Health Officers can be contacted as follows: -

East Devon	01395 516551	South Hams	01803 861234
Exeter	01392 277888	Teignbridge	01626 361101
Mid Devon	01884 255255	Torbay	01803 208010
North Devon	01271 388870	Torridge	01237 428809
Plymouth	01752 668000	West Devon	01822 813600

What causes it?

People suffer from diarrhoea (*with or without vomiting*) for a number of different reasons. This leaflet deals only with infectious causes, which are bacteria (*such as salmonella or campylobacter*), parasites (*such as cryptosporidium or giardia*) and viruses (*such as norovirus, previously known as norwalk*).

How these germs spread

The bacteria, parasites and viruses that cause diarrhoea and vomiting may be spread by: -

- A sufferer to other people through physical contact;
- Infected food;
- Contaminated surfaces;
- The "environment", such as untreated water;
- Animals.

General Advice

1. Personal Hygiene

Pay particular attention to your personal hygiene during and after your illness. You can still be carrying the germ for some weeks after your symptoms have finished.

a. Hand Washing

Wash and dry hands regularly using soap (*preferably a liquid soap*) and your own towel. Use the wash hand basin and not the kitchen sink.

b. After Using the Toilet

- Wipe off the toilet seat (*top and underside*), toilet handle, taps, etc. with a bathroom disinfectant (*then wash your hands*).
- Wash and dry hands using the wash hand basin, not the kitchen sink.
- Keep a separate towel that is for your use only.
- If there is more than one toilet, keep one toilet for use only by the sick person.
- Soiled linen and underwear should **NOT** be washed or rinsed in the kitchen sink. If using a washing machine, use the hot cycle.

2. Preparation of Food

If you do not need to handle or prepare food, then you should avoid doing so until 48 hours after you have fully recovered. If you have to handle or prepare food, then it is essential that you wash and dry your hands using soap and a separate towel before doing so.

3. Contact with other People

Tell anyone nursing you or sharing your home that you are suffering with diarrhoea and show them these guidelines. You should avoid contact with other people until at least 24 hours after you are fully recovered. Affected children should not go to school or nursery, or play with others until at least 48 hours after full recovery.

4. Those with suspected or confirmed food poisoning or food borne diseases

Environmental Health staff will contact people suffering from suspected or confirmed food poisoning or food borne illnesses to:-

- Give advice on how to prevent spreading the infection to others;
- Find out where they caught the illness.

If you have not been contacted by a member of the Environmental Health Department within 48 hours of your GP confirming the type of food poisoning or food borne illness you are suffering from, then please contact your local department on the telephone numbers given on the front page.

5. Treatment

There is usually no specific treatment; antibiotics are not usually prescribed. **Your pharmacist can advise you** about re-hydration fluids and medicines to stop diarrhoea. It is important to drink enough. Try small amounts of clear fluids for 24 hours, avoid solid food and milk and introduce soft, bland foods such as potatoes, bread and dry biscuits in small amounts. Once your bowel motions are more solid, you can start eating your usual diet. Avoid fruit and foods that contain roughage such as bran, until your diarrhoea has stopped.

If your symptoms persist or there is also severe pain or blood in your bowel motions, call NHS Direct (0845 4647) or your GP.

Giving a Sample

If requested, please try to provide a stool sample as soon as possible. Samples are required to identify the illness correctly and to check whether it is still present. You can feel better but still have the germs which can be passed onto others. You will be given a plastic pot with a spatula inside.

- Write your full name, date of birth and the sample date on the side of the pot.
- The spatula should be used to scrape up some of the solid matter when you go to the toilet. (This is best achieved by placing a potty or similar item in the toilet. Disinfect the container carefully after use).
- A small amount will be enough, so please do not fill the pot.
- The spatula and solid matter should be put into the pot and the lid screwed down firmly.
- Place the pot into the plastic bag.

Please do not supply any urine, vomit or water. Results will normally be available within 5 working days, but some tests take longer.

Additional information for people who work with food, the elderly or the young

1. Please contact the Environmental Health staff immediately (*please see front page for details*) who will give advice on the prevention of spreading the infection to others.
2. If you work with food, the elderly or the young, then you should:
 - Notify your employer immediately;
 - Stay away from work until you have not had any vomiting and or diarrhoea (*and are completely back to normal*) for 48 hours;
 - If you have taken anti-diarrhoeal drugs, you should stay away from work for at least 48 hours after you have finished treatment and return only if your diarrhoea has not recurred.
3. Inform your employer before you return to work.

Prevention of food poisoning and food borne diseases:-

1. Always wash your hands before eating or preparing food.
2. Always wash your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet and after handling raw foods.
3. Always wash your hands after touching pets and animals, especially if they are ill.
4. Never let raw foods come in contact with cooked foods. Always ensure that cooked foods are stored above raw foods in your fridge and that the raw foods are in sealed containers.
5. Work surfaces, utensils and kitchen equipment must be thoroughly washed and disinfected after being used for raw foods. A range of kitchen surface cleaners that also kill germs are available from most supermarkets.
6. Ensure frozen meat, especially poultry, is thoroughly defrosted before it is cooked and then cooked thoroughly.
7. Never use raw eggs in products that are not to be cooked and avoid eating eggs with runny yolks; this is especially important for the young and the elderly. Store eggs in the fridge and use by the date on the box.
8. Once food is cooked, serve immediately or chill rapidly (within one and a half hours) and place within the refrigerator (*which should be less than 5°C*).

Further information is available from your local Environmental Health Department, the Health Protection Team or your doctor.