

STOMACH AILMENTS



diarrhoea
constipation
nausea
vomiting
gut flora imbalances



DIARRHOEA



Diarrhoea is 'loose', watery stools (bowel movements) that pass three or more times in one day.^{1a}

Diarrhoea usually lasts 1 or 2 days, if diarrhoea continues for 4 weeks, this can be a symptom of a chronic disease.^{1a,b}

[H3] What causes diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea can affect people of all ages.¹ⁱ The different causes are explained

below:

Icon: food/water
Cause: **Bacteria** from contaminated food or water.^{1c}
Bacterial gastroenteritis can affect one person or a group of people who all ate the same food. It is commonly called *food poisoning*.^{2a} Types of bacteria include *E. coli* or *Salmonella*.^{2b} All types of food poisoning cause diarrhoea.^{2c}

Icon: Washing hands
Cause: Viruses^{1d}
Viral gastroenteritis is caused by a **virus** e.g. rotavirus and norovirus^{1d,3a} Viruses can be spread from person-to-person, commonly through unclean hands or the airborne route.^{3b}

Icon: River/Dam
Cause: Parasites^{1e}
Diarrhoea can be due to **parasites** found in contaminated water.^{1e}

Icon: Medicines
Cause: Medicines^{1f}
Medications such as antibiotics, magnesium-containing antacids or cancer drugs^{1f}

Icon: Gluten/Wheat/Dairy
Cause: Food^{1g}
Food intolerance or sensitivity due to problems digesting certain foods^{1g}

Icon: IBS (stomach knot)
Cause: Disease^{1h} **Diseases** that affect the stomach, small intestine or colon such as Crohn's disease or Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).^{1h}

Symptoms

Diarrhoea can be accompanied by other symptoms such as:

- Cramps or pain in the abdomen^{1k}
- An urgent need to use the bathroom^{1k}
- Loss of bowel control^{1k}
- Fever, chills, and bloody stools^{1l}
- Nausea, vomiting^{2d}
- Dehydration^{1m}

NB: Dehydration can be serious, especially for children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.^{1m}

[H3] Treatment

The most important treatment for diarrhoea is replacing lost fluids and electrolytes to prevent dehydration,¹ⁿ

- oral rehydration solutions to replace lost fluids and electrolytes^{1n,p}
- water, fruit juices, sports drinks, sodas without caffeine, and salty broths^{1o}
- soft, bland food^{1o}
- zinc and probiotics^{3c,d}

Medicines may be needed to stop the diarrhoea or treat an infection.¹ⁿ



Tips for good food hygiene:

- Wash hands and utensils well before preparing food^{2e}
- Store frozen or refrigerated foods at the correct temperatures^{2f}
- Wash raw fruits or vegetables well^{2g}
- Do not eat undercooked meat or eggs^{2h}

OTHER STOMACH AILMENTS

CONSTIPATION



Constipation is when an individual has three or fewer bowel movements in a week.^{4a}

Symptoms

The stool can be hard and dry and sometimes painful to pass.^{4a}

Treatment

To prevent constipation, the diet must be high in fruit, vegetables and grains which are high in fibre. Drinking plenty of fluids is also important as well as getting enough exercise. Medications to help treat constipation are called **laxatives**.^{4b,5a}

Laxatives. Over-the-counter laxatives are available to treat occasional constipation in a variety of ways.^{5b}

- Draw water into the colon to allow easier passage of stool^{5c}
- Absorb water to form soft, bulky stool, prompting normal contraction of intestinal muscles^{5d}
- Stimulate rhythmic contractions of intestinal muscles to eliminate stool^{5e}

Speak to your doctor or pharmacist about the best laxative or dietary and lifestyle changes that suit you best.^{5f,g}

NAUSEA AND VOMITING



Nausea is the 'feeling' of wanting to vomit.^{6a} Vomiting is when you actually throw up.^{6a}

What causes nausea?

Nausea can be a symptom of many different disorders.^{6b,7a}

Icon: Pregnant	Icon: Stomach	Icon: Brain	Icon: Car	Icon: Medicine
Morning sickness ^{6b}	Gastroenteritis ^{6b}	Migraine ^{6b}	Motion sickness ^{6b}	Cancer chemotherapy ^{6b}

Treatment:

Medicines can be used to relieve nausea and vomiting, they are called **antiemetics**.^{6c} Several over-the-counter medicines are used as antiemetics:^{7b}

Antacids. Bismuth subsalicylate or a solution of glucose, fructose and phosphoric acid can help by coating the stomach lining and neutralising stomach acid.^{7c}

Antihistamines. Certain types may help prevent nausea and vomiting caused by motion sickness by blocking a vomiting trigger in the brain.^{7d}

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)



IBS is abdominal pain and discomfort, with constipation or diarrhoea, lasting at least one day a week for three months.^{8a}

Symptoms

The main symptom is related to pain and discomfort in relation to passing stool. Some people will have constipation-related symptoms and some will have diarrhoea-related symptoms, or both.^{8a,b}

Treatment:

Treatments focus on correcting any dietary sensitivities and gut flora balance.^{8c,g,h} Medications can include;

Fibre supplements. Taking a supplement such as psyllium with fluids may help control constipation.^{8d}

Laxatives. If fibre doesn't help constipation symptoms, magnesium hydroxide or other laxatives may be used.^{8e}

Anti-diarrhoeal medications. Loperamide or other anti-diarrhoeals can help control diarrhoea. Bile acid binders, such as cholestyramine can also help.^{8f}

Reducing stress, exercising regularly and simple changes to diet and lifestyle can often provide relief from IBS.⁸ⁱ



Gut flora imbalances



Probiotics have been shown to help in the treatment or prevention of diarrhoea caused by gastroenteritis, use of antibiotics or conditions affecting the bowel function like irritable bowel syndrome or Crohn's disease.^{9a}

If you suffer from diarrhoea, constipation, nausea or vomiting or from a more long-term ailment relating to your stomach function, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for advice on best management and treatment options for your condition.

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