

Diarrhea



Diarrhea is when you pass **stool** many times a day, and it is watery and loose. (Passing stool is called having a “bowel movement.”)

Diarrhea is one way your child’s body fights **infection**. Diarrhea can also clean out your child’s **intestines** when he or she eats something bad. Children get diarrhea often, especially mild diarrhea.

Breast-fed babies have many soft bowel movements in a day. They may pass stool every time they eat. Twelve or more bowel movements a day is O.K. This is not diarrhea. Bottle-fed babies don’t have as many bowel movements. Even so, 1 or 2 loose stools is not diarrhea. In a baby, diarrhea is *many* very runny bowel movements.

Many things can cause diarrhea:

- Infection by **viruses**, **bacteria**, or **parasites** (A virus is the most common cause. Your child may also throw up, have a fever, have a runny nose, and/or feel very tired. Children can catch these viruses at school or daycare.)
- Eating too much of foods they are not used to.
- Food poisoning.
- **Allergies**. (Example: milk allergy).
- Taking too many **laxatives**. (Example: Teens trying to lose weight sometimes take laxatives.)

- Taking some medicines. (Example: **Antibiotics**.)
- Getting upset.
- Drinking bad water or food while traveling.
- Catching an infection from someone else who has been travelling.

Watch out for **dehydration**.

Dehydration is when your body doesn’t have enough water. This is very important if your child is throwing up, too. Dehydration can happen very fast in babies and young children.

Questions to Ask

Is the person with **diarrhea** a baby or young child? Does the baby or child have any of these problems with the diarrhea?

- Sunken eyes.
- Dry mouth and dry skin.
- Crying that has few or no tears.
- Dry diaper for more than 3 hours in a baby.
- Passing no **urine** for more than 6 hours in a child.
- Feeling weak and tired.
- Easily upset or cranky.

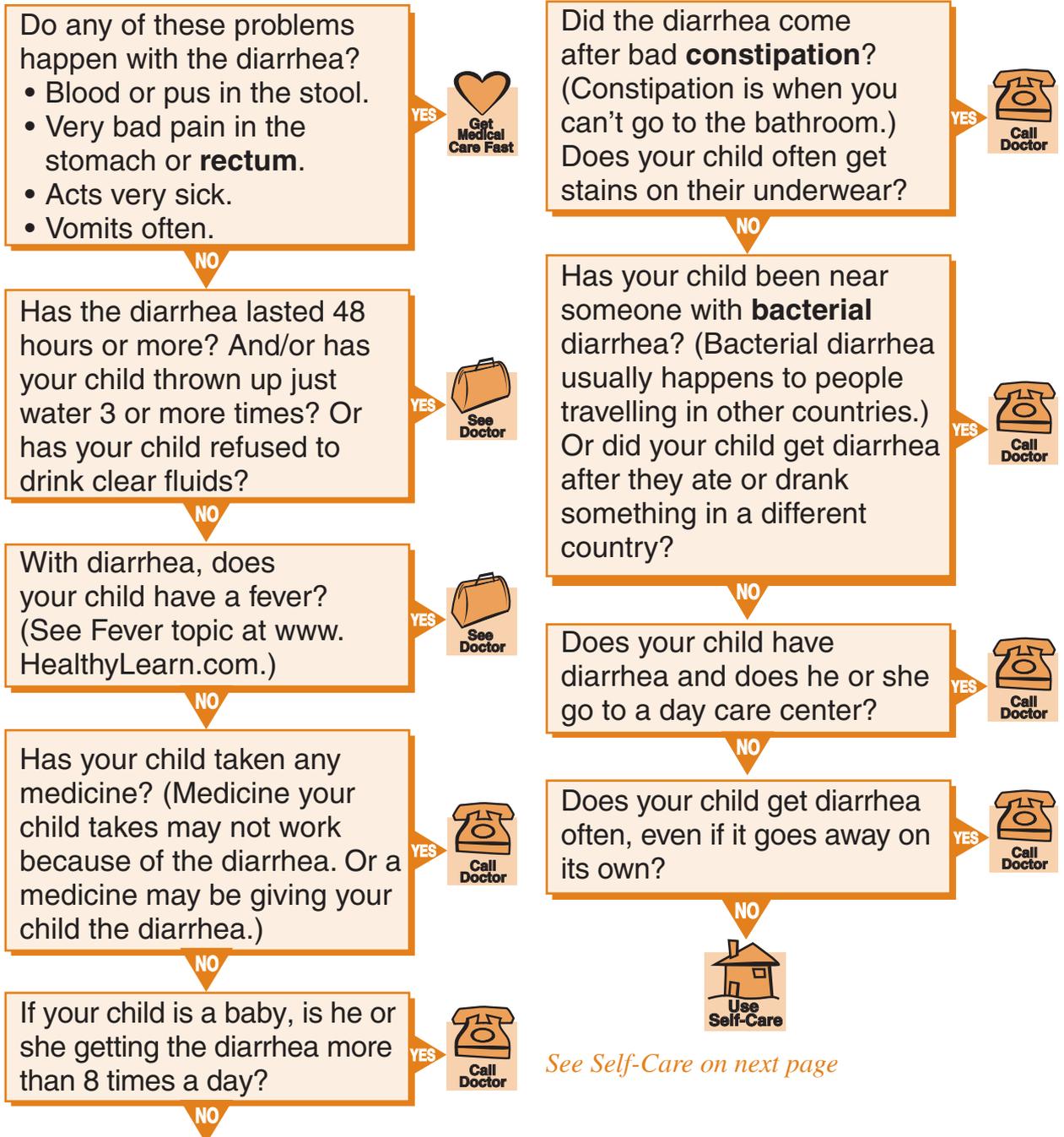


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See Self-Care on next page



Self-Care Tips

Note: If your child is vomiting, treat this first. (See “Vomiting & Nausea at www.HealthyLearn.com.)

Do the tips that follow if your child shows these signs of dehydration

- Is thirsty.
 - Has a dry mouth and dry skin.
 - Has a dry diaper or passed little or no urine.
 - Is confused or dizzy.
 - Is weak or has a weak cry.
- Get medical care fast.
 - Stop solid foods. Give clear liquids. Give the liquids the doctor tells you to give.
 - For bottle-fed babies and children under 2, give **over-the-counter** mixtures like Pedialyte®. They have liquid and minerals.
 - For breast-fed babies, nurse the baby. But give only as much breast milk as the baby wants. Feed every 2 hours. Ask the baby’s doctor about giving water and **over-the-counter** mixtures.
 - For children over age 2, give up to 6 cups of liquid per day. Good choices are:
 - Over-the-counter mixtures, like Pedialyte®.

- Kool-Aid®.
- Sports drinks, like Gatorade®.
- Water, but don’t give just water. Give other clear liquids, too.

- *Don’t* give your child very cold or hot liquids or boiled milk.
- *Don’t* give your child liquids with lots of sugar, like soft drinks, gelatins, grape juice, and apple juice. These can make the diarrhea worse.
- *Don’t* give just clear liquids for more than 24 hours. Start normal meals within 12 hours.

Do the tips that follow if there are no signs of dehydration

- Feed your child normal meals. Your child may want to eat smaller amounts than normal.
- *Don’t* give fatty or fried foods.
- *Don’t* give your child foods that upset his or her stomach.
- *Don’t* feed your child just a B.R.A.T. diet. This was an old way to treat diarrhea. B.R.A.T. stands for ripe Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, and dry Toast. It is O.K. to give your child these foods with other ones, though.
- *Don’t* let your child exercise too hard until the diarrhea is all gone.





- *Don't* give your child Kaopectate® or other **over-the-counter** medicines to stop diarrhea unless your child's doctor says it's O.K. And, don't give your child Pepto-Bismol®. Like aspirin, Pepto-Bismol® has **salicylates** which have been linked to **Reye's Syndrome**, a condition that can kill. See "Signs of Reye's Syndrome" at www.HealthyLearn.com.

- To keep diarrhea germs from spreading, follow these tips:
 - Make sure your child washes his or her hands after using the toilet.
 - Give your child paper towels to dry his or her hands.
 - Have everyone at home wash their hands often, so the infection doesn't spread.
 - Be sure to wash your hands after changing diapers or washing your child.



Follow these steps to avoid food poisoning

- Wash your hands with warm soapy water for 20 seconds (count to 30) before you handle food or items used to prepare foods.
- Use clean tools and clean surfaces when you prepare foods.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs, and fish away from other foods, utensils, and serving plates.
- Wash your hands after you touch or prepare raw meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, or eggs. Wash the items used to prepare these foods, too. Use hot soapy water or put them in the dishwasher.
- *Don't* mix raw foods with cooked and ready-to-eat foods when you shop, prepare, and store foods.
- Store foods that can spoil in the refrigerator. Read food labels. Use leftovers stored in the refrigerator within 3 to 4 days.
- *Don't* eat raw eggs or eggs that aren't cooked enough. Don't eat foods with raw eggs like cookie batter.
- Cook foods to a safe temperature. Check and follow the label or recipe.
- Keep hot foods hot (higher than 140°F) and cold foods cold (40°F or lower).