



# Diarrhoea

## Patient information leaflet



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Common Ailments Service

**Only use this leaflet if your pharmacist has advised you about your or your child's condition.**

Diarrhoea means passing loose or watery stools (poo) at least 3 times in 24 hours or more often than is normal for you. It usually gets better within 7 days.

Diarrhoea is often caused by viruses or bacteria (stomach bugs) that have come from food (food poisoning), water, or another person. Other causes include:

- food allergy
- medicines such as antibiotics
- anxiety

As well as watery poo, you may:

- have crampy tummy pains
- be sick (vomit)
- have a high temperature
- have a headache
- have aching arms and legs



## Treatment and Prevention

**Making sure you have enough fluid (keeping hydrated) is important when you have diarrhoea.**

Aim to:

- drink lots of water or squash – take small sips if you feel sick
- avoid fruit juice and fizzy drinks – these can make your diarrhoea worse
- reduce your caffeine and alcohol intake
- eat when you feel able to – there is no need to avoid foods you would usually eat

If your baby has diarrhoea:

- carry on breast or bottle feeding them as normal
- having smaller feeds more often may help if they are being sick as well
- and is formula-fed or on solid foods, you can give them sips of water between feeds

### How to recognise dehydration

Babies and young children who are dehydrated may have fewer wet nappies and be drowsy or irritable. Adults and children over 5 years old with dehydration may have dark yellow, smelly pee, pee less often than usual and be thirsty, dizzy or tired.



## Treatment and Prevention

### Medicines that can help

**These medicines are not suitable for everyone. Make sure you have asked your pharmacist for advice about what treatment is best for you or your child.**

If you or your child (over 5 years old) has signs of dehydration, your pharmacist may advise you to buy **oral rehydration sachets**.

If you or your child (over 12 years old) need to stop the diarrhoea for a few hours, your pharmacist may recommend buying **loperamide**.

**Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with your medicine.**

If you are concerned about any side effects from a treatment, report it to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also report side effects on the Yellow Card [app](#) or [website](#).

### Reducing the spread of diarrhoea

To avoid passing the stomach bug on to other people:

- wash your hands often, with soap and water
- clean toilet seats, flush handles, taps, surfaces and door handles every day
- do not prepare food for other people, if possible
- avoid sharing towels, flannels, cutlery or utensils with other people
- stay away from work, school and childcare facilities until you have not had diarrhoea for at least 2 days
- stay at home and avoid contact with other people until you feel better if you have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go about your life as normal
- wait until 2 weeks after your diarrhoea has stopped before using a public swimming pool

### Side effects of medicines

Speak to your pharmacist or see your GP if you think one or more of your medicines might be giving you diarrhoea or if you are worried about the effect that the diarrhoea is having on your medicines. For example:

- the oral contraceptive pill may not be effective if you have diarrhoea
- some medicines such as water tablets (diuretics) or lithium can have serious side effects if you have diarrhoea

If you are unsure speak to your pharmacist or doctor.

To check the common side effects of your medicines, look at the leaflets that came with them or find information about your medicines on the Electronic Medicines Compendium (<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc>).



## When to Get Help

### Contact your GP or call 111 if your child:

- is a baby under 12 months old with diarrhoea and you are worried about them
- stops breast or bottle feeding when they are ill
- is under 5 years old and has signs of dehydration, such as fewer wet nappies

### Contact your GP or call 111 if you or your child:

- have used oral rehydration sachets (only suitable for children over 5 years old) but still have signs of dehydration
- have a high temperature
- keep being sick and cannot keep fluid down
- have very bad tummy ache and your tummy feels tender
- have blood or pus in your poo or bleeding from the bottom
- have diarrhoea for more than 7 days or vomiting for more than 2 days
- have diarrhoea mostly at night
- have lost a lot of weight and do not know why
- have diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, or a weakened immune system, for example from cancer treatment or steroid therapy
- have been in hospital in the last 12 weeks
- have recently been abroad

### Call 999 or go to A&E if you or your child:

- have a sudden, severe stomach ache

If you are worried that your or your child's condition is not getting better, or is getting worse, talk to your GP.



## More information

For more information on diarrhoea or a medicine, talk to your pharmacist or look at the following websites:

NHS 111 Wales: <https://111.wales.nhs.uk/encyclopaedia/d/article/diarrhoeaandvomiting>

Patient UK: <https://patient.info/digestive-health/diarrhoea>

Medicines A-Z: <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/>

Information from the above resources is included in this leaflet.



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh.

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