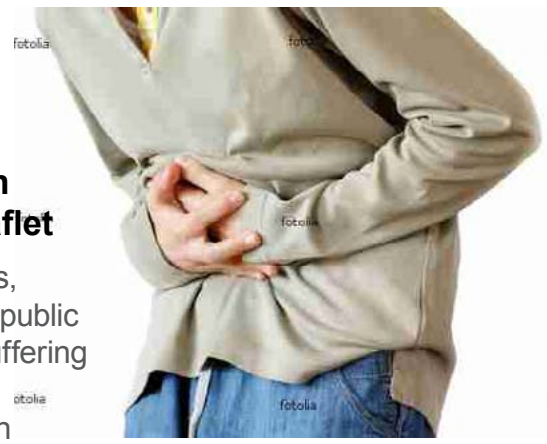


# Advice for people suffering from food poisoning or diarrhoea



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

When you are confirmed as having food poisoning or food borne illness, local council Environmental Health Officers are notified as part of their public health protection role. Environmental Health staff will contact people suffering from suspected or confirmed food poisoning or food borne illnesses to investigate the source and give advice to prevent the spread of infection

## Preventing spreading the infection to others

**If you work with food, the young or the elderly, then you must:**

- **Notify** your employer immediately.
- Stay away from work until **at least 48 hours** after your first normal stool and you are fully recovered.
- 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.
- Certain infections including dysentery, *E .coli* O157, typhoid and paratyphoid will require **medical clearance** before returning to food handling duties.

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 at the end of the leaflet.

## What causes food poisoning or diarrhoea?

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:

- Physical contact with an infected person by contamination on hands.
- Infected food
- Contaminated surfaces
- The environment, such as untreated contaminated water, or animal faeces.
- Animals

## General advice

### Personal hygiene

Hand washing is particularly important. You can still be carrying the germ for some weeks after you symptoms have finished so it is important to pay particular attention to your personal hygiene not only during but after your illness. Ensure you wash and dry hands regularly using soap (preferably antibacterial liquid soap) and have a towel for your use only. See the thorough hand washing method at the end of this leaflet. Use the wash hand basin and not the kitchen sink. Always wash hands thoroughly before preparing food and eating, after handling raw foods including vegetables, after using the toilet and touching pets or animals.

### Contact with other people

You should avoid contact with other people until **48hrs after** you have fully recovered, if possible.

Tell anyone nursing you or sharing your home that you are suffering with diarrhoea and show them these guidelines. Affected children should not go to school or nursery, or play with others until at least 48 hours after their first normal stool and full recovery.

### Hygiene at home

If possible reserve one toilet for the use of the sick person only.

Regularly clean the toilet (including top and underside of seat), taps and door handle of bathroom/toilet with detergent and wipe down with a disinfectant.

Do not wash or rinse off soiled underwear in the kitchen sink. Use the washing machine, if possible on a hot cycle.

## Preparing food at home

If you do not need to handle or prepare food, then you should avoid doing so until **48 hours after** your first normal stool and 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.

- Always wash hands thoroughly using soap and water and dry them afterwards.

- Keep raw foods, including vegetables, separate from ready-to-eat foods/cooked foods.
- Use different chopping boards, knives and utensils for raw and ready-to-eat foods, or wash them thoroughly in hot soapy water in between preparing different foods and use a kitchen surface cleaner that kills germs. These are available from most supermarkets.
- Unless packaging around vegetables says 'ready-to-eat' you must wash, peel or cook them before consuming
- If you do use raw eggs, use them only in dishes that are thoroughly cooked, or cook them until the white and yolk are solid. The young and elderly should avoid eating eggs with runny yolks. Store eggs in a cool, dry place, ideally in the fridge and use by the date on the box.
- Ensure frozen meat, especially poultry, is thoroughly defrosted before it is cooked, and then cooked thoroughly.
- Once food is cooked, serve immediately or chill rapidly (within one and half hours) and place within the refrigerator (which should be less than 5°C).

## Treatment

You can avoid dehydration by drinking lots of fluids. Take small, frequent sips of water. Your pharmacist can advise about re-hydration fluids and medicines to stop diarrhoea (anti-diarrhoeal drugs are not usually recommended and should not be taken if there is blood in the stool). Expert opinion is divided over when and what you should eat if you have diarrhoea, but most agree that you should eat solid food as soon as you feel able to. Eat small, light

meals and avoid fatty, spicy or heavy foods.

There is usually no specific treatment; antibiotics are not usually prescribed.

**You should contact your doctor if:**

- you become dehydrated
- there is blood in the stool
- there is severe pain
- symptoms persist

Further advice is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or from NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

## 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 the germs are still present. You will be given a plastic pot with a spatula inside.

**To collect a stool sample:**

- write your full name, date of birth and the sample date on the side of the pot
- wear disposable rubber or plastic gloves
- place something in the toilet to catch the stool, such as a potty or an empty plastic food container (discard or disinfect afterwards), or spread clean newspaper or plastic wrap over the rim of the toilet
- make sure you don't collect urine with the sample
- use the spatula to place the sample in the sample pot and screw the lid shut
- put the gloves and anything else you used to collect the sample in the bin and wash your hands thoroughly

Results will normally be available within 5 working days, but some tests take longer.

This advice is produced by the South West (**South**) Health Protection Unit (0844 225 3557) in consultation with local NHS organisations. Further information is available from your local environmental health department, the health protection team, or your doctor.

## Washing hands effectively

**Step 1** Wet your hands thoroughly under warm running water and squirt liquid soap onto your palm.



**Step 2** Rub your hands together palm to palm to make a lather



**Step 3** Rub the palm of one hand along the back of the other and along the fingers. Repeat with the other hand.



**Step 4** Put your palms together with fingers interlocked and rub in between each of the fingers thoroughly.



**Step 5** Rub around your thumbs on each hand and then rub the fingertips of each hand against your palms.



**Step 6** Rinse off the soap with clean water and dry your hands thoroughly on a disposable towel. Turn off the tap with the towel and then throw the towel away.



## Contacting Environmental Health

Local environmental health officers can be contacted as follows:

<b>East Devon</b>	01395	517457
<b>South Hams</b>	01803	861234
<b>Torbay</b>	01803	208025
<b>Exeter</b>	01392	265193
<b>Teignbridge</b>	01626	215424 /215420
<b>Torrige</b>	01237	428700
<b>Mid Devon</b>	01884	244601
<b>West Devon</b>	01822	813600
<b>Plymouth</b>	01752	304141
<b>North Devon</b>	01271	388870

