

# Diarrhoea

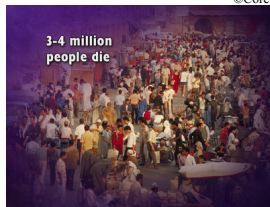
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1

Everyone gets sick. Some sicknesses are so simple we don't even notice them. Others require our immediate attention. What should we do if someone has diarrhoea?

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Every year, 3-4 million people die from diarrhoea.<sup>1</sup>

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3

Most of these are children under two years of age. This is because diarrhoea in children can quickly lead to dehydration, and there is not enough water left in the body.<sup>2</sup>

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4

**What causes diarrhoea?**

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Most people with diarrhoea have an infection in their intestines. There are many kinds of germs that can cause diarrhoea; and these germs are spread by:

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**Not washing** hands or cups, plates, and spoons

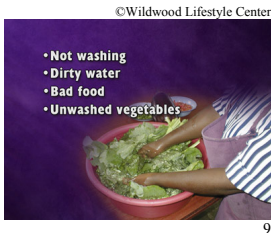
# Diarrhoea



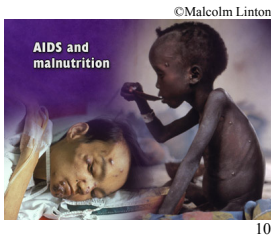
- **Dirty water**



- **Food** that is bad or dirty (or)



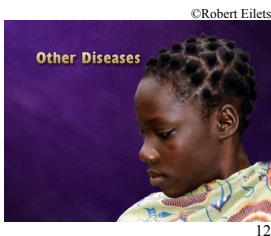
- **Unwashed vegetables.**



- **AIDS** and **malnutrition** make the body very weak and less able to fight infections. They make adults and children more likely to get sick with diarrhoea.



- Even some medicines can cause diarrhea.

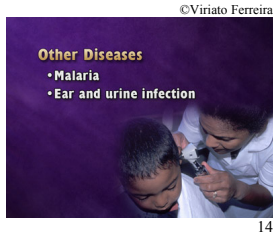


- Other diseases can also cause diarrhoea, like:

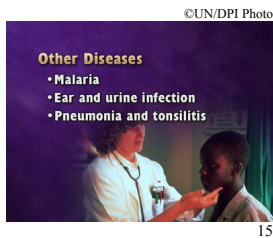
# Diarrhoea



- Malaria



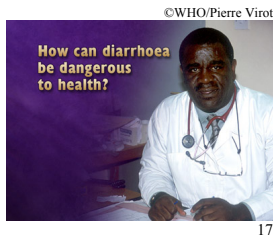
- Ear and urine infections,



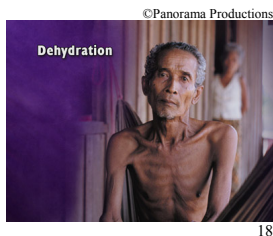
- Pneumonia and tonsillitis (and also)



- Cancer of the large intestine.



- How can diarrhoea be dangerous to health?

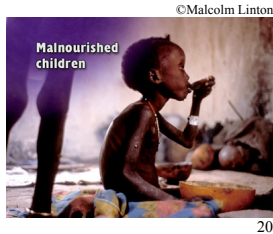


The biggest danger is that the body will become dry and **dehydrated**. Many people believe that they shouldn't drink a lot of water if they have diarrhoea; they believe that the more they drink, the more diarrhoea they will have! This is not true.

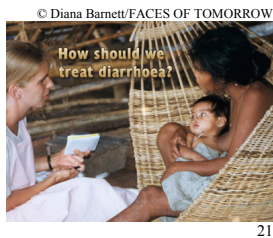
# Diarrhoea



If people with diarrhoea do not drink a lot, they may become dehydrated and may even die. When we have diarrhoea, we need plenty of liquids.



Malnourished children can get diarrhoea easily. In these children, diarrhoea may worsen the **malnutrition** and lead to death.



How should we treat diarrhoea?



For most cases of diarrhoea no medicine is needed.

No matter what the cause of diarrhoea is, always take care with the following:



**Prevent or treat dehydration.** A person with diarrhoea must drink a lot of liquids.



It is very easy to make “rehydration drink.” (This has been taught in the lesson about Dehydration.) Even if the person does not want to drink, gently insist that they do so.

# Diarrhoea



Have them take several swallows every few minutes. Even if the person vomits a lot, they should still drink small amounts every 5 or 10 minutes.



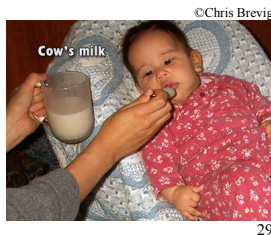
**Give food.** A person with diarrhoea needs food, especially children who are malnourished. Remember that when a person has diarrhoea, food passes through the gut very quickly.



Because of this you may give small amounts of food frequently.



**Keep giving breast milk** to a baby who has diarrhoea. Breast milk does not cause diarrhoea.



If breast milk is not available, cow's milk, can be a good source of nutrition. Keep on giving it to a child with diarrhoea. But remember—



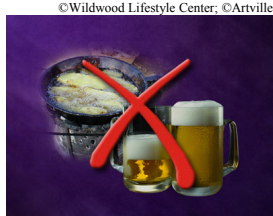
These milks can sometimes make the diarrhoea **worse!**

# Diarrhoea



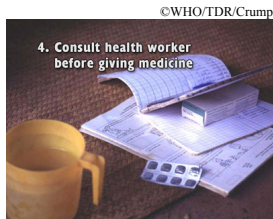
31

If this happens, give the baby other foods such as mashed potatoes, yams, porridge made with corn or other flour mixed with well cooked beans or lentils. Beans are easier to digest if their skins have been taken off and they are mashed.



32

**Do not eat fatty or greasy foods and do not drink alcohol when you have diarrhoea.**



33

**Do not give anti-diarrhoea medicines without consulting your health worker.**

Some medicines such as Lomotil or Imodium may even cause harm or make infections last longer.<sup>3</sup> For most cases of diarrhoea, no medicine is needed.



34

When should we seek medical help?



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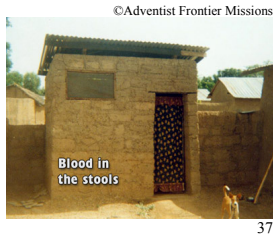
If the diarrhoea is very severe.



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If the person shows signs of dehydration and is getting worse in spite of the treatment you are giving.

# Diarrhoea



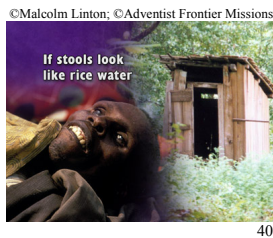
If there is blood in the stools



If the person is vomiting a lot and not drinking much (especially in children)



If the diarrhoea is not getting better after 4 days



If the stools look like “rice water”. This could be cholera.



If there is high fever or any other signs of another disease causing the diarrhoea.



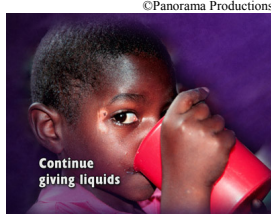
If the person has severe abdominal pain

# Diarrhoea



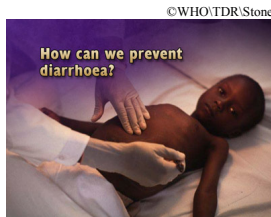
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If the face and feet swell, or if the person starts to have fits



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Remember to continue giving liquids even while traveling to the clinic. Take enough liquids for the journey.



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How can we prevent diarrhoea?



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The prevention of diarrhoea depends on both **cleanliness and good nutrition**.



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**Breastfeed** rather than bottle-feed babies. This helps them to resist infections.



48

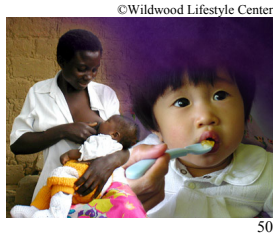
If it is not possible to breastfeed a baby, give him milk with a **cup and spoon** if possible. Do not use bottles; they are more difficult to keep clean.



# Diarrhoea



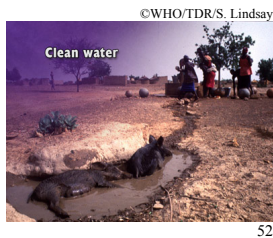
Always try to give **only** breast milk to babies in the first 4 to 6 months of life. When you begin to give the baby solid food, do not stop breastfeeding.



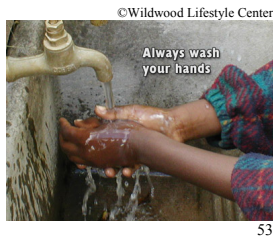
Start with other foods while still breastfeeding. Try to breast feed for as long as possible; a year or two is best.



Keep the yard clean. If anyone has a bowel movement near the house, clean it up quickly.



Protect your drinking water, especially from feces of people and animals.



Always wash hands after having a bowel movement and before preparing food.



Don't use the spoon, fork, plate or cup of someone with diarrhoea. The germs can spread easily.

# Diarrhoea



Store food in a clean, cool place. Remember that germs that cause diarrhoea can grow quickly in cooked or stored food. Eating food as fresh as possible can help avoid much sickness.



Diarrhea can be a very serious illness, yet we need not fear. In the Bible God says,



“Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you.” Isaiah 41:10 *New Living Translation (NLT)*



Today we have learned that there are many simple things that can be done to protect us from diarrhea, and with the use of simple remedies most cases can be treated safely.

Let's do our best to preserve the health and happiness of our friends and family.

<sup>1</sup> Eddleston, M. Pierini, S. *Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine*, Oxford, 1999 p.130.

<sup>2</sup> Werner, D. *Where there is no Doctor*, The Hesperian Foundation, 1999 p.151

<sup>3</sup> Werner, D. *Where there is no Doctor*, The Hesperian Foundation, 1999 p.156