

### Do you need to stay off work, school or nursery?

**YES** – Until you have been free from any symptoms for at least **48 hours**

If you or a family/household member is affected by diarrhoea &/or vomiting:

- Do not prepare food if at all possible until you have been symptom free for 48 hours
- Do not go to work, school or nursery until you have been symptom free for 48 hours
- Do not visit hospitals or other health care establishments until you have been symptom free for 48 hours

*In some instances, where your doctor has identified the specific cause for your illness, you may be required to stay off work, school or nursery for longer than 48 hours and the above general guidance may not apply.*

**For further advice or information contact:**

*Your Local Environmental Health Department.  
the Community Infection Control Nurse,  
or  
your local Health Protection Unit  
also  
the Health Protection Agency website at  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk>*

Information produced by collaboration between:

The Health Protection Agency North West,  
North West Infection Prevention & Control Nurses  
and  
North West Environmental Health Officers.



# HPA North West



## Diarrhoea & Vomiting

**INFORMATION LEAFLET**

## Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Diarrhoea is unexpected episodes of loose or watery bowel movements that are more frequent than normal.

There are many reasons why people experience symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting (D&V), including:

- taking medications such as antibiotics
- infections with bacteria, viruses and parasites

This leaflet aims to provide some advice on how to manage D&V and how to minimise the risk of spread to other members of the family or household. It also outlines what you could do to help identify the cause of your D&V.

## What should I do if I have diarrhoea or vomiting?

If you are experiencing D&V symptoms then:

- Ensure you drink plenty of water to prevent the effects of dehydration – be particularly aware of this in young children and elderly people
- Seek medical attention if you are unwell
- Your GP may request a specimen/sample

## Who can it affect?

**ANYONE** – but the very young, older people, people who have problems with their immune system and pregnant women may be more vulnerable

Where possible, stay away from other people until your symptoms have stopped especially vulnerable people.

## How do you prevent spread?

Good general personal and domestic cleanliness is important in helping prevent the spread of infection.

Hand washing is the most important way to stop the spread of infection.

Ensure you and all household members wash their hands thoroughly with warm water and soap and dry thoroughly.

- After using or cleaning the toilet
- Before eating, preparing or serving food
- After attending to another person who has diarrhoea / vomiting
- After changing a baby's nappy
- After handling or washing soiled clothes and bedding

Ensure each person affected has an individual towel for drying their hands. Ensure young children are supervised when washing hands, or have their hands washed for them.

When washing soiled linen, the following advice is applicable:

- For any items/clothes soiled with faeces or vomit, any 'solids' should be carefully put down the toilet and flushed away.
- Soiled linen should be washed separately in the washing machine using a pre-wash if possible and on the hottest temperature possible for the fabric.
- Do **not** use the half wash button **or** the rapid wash function.
- Use a biological washing powder whenever possible.
- Do **not** overload the washing machine.
- Wipe down the outside surface of the washing machine after loading with hot soapy water & a disposable cloth.
- You may wish to run an empty hot (90 C) cycle to 'wash through' your machine if you have washed heavily soiled items.

When cleaning, pay particular attention to the toilet bowl and seat (surface and underneath) as well as taps, flush handles and surrounding area and surfaces that may have been contaminated by germs.