

# DIARRHEA

## WHAT IS DIARRHEA?

It is the passage of liquid stools or the frequent passage of normal stool. Normal bowel habit varies greatly from person to person, but above 12 months of age, more than three loose stools per day is considered abnormal. If the duration is less than two weeks it is considered to be "acute diarrhea". If the duration is more than two weeks the condition is considered to be "chronic diarrhea". In this pamphlet we will discuss acute diarrhea only.

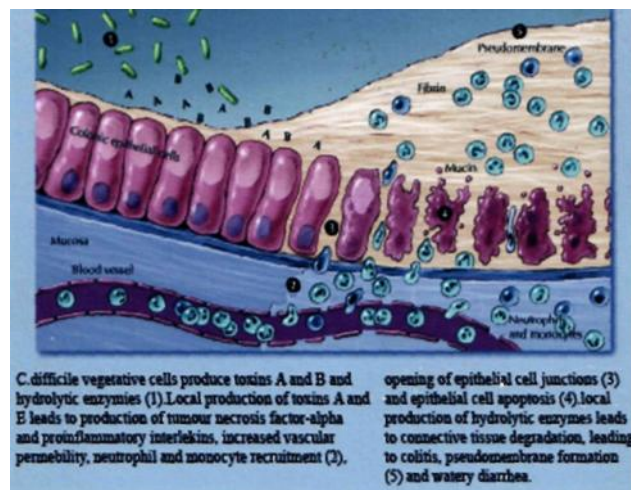
## WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION

*(signs and symptoms is the Doctor looking for?)*

There are three main questions that will lead the doctor to determine the cause, and how to treat your acute diarrhea.

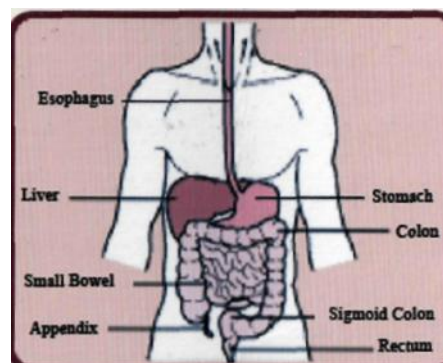
1. How long have you been suffering from diarrhea?
2. Have you seen any blood in your stools?
2. Do you have fever?

Please see the flow chart that will explain further on back page.



## HOW DID YOU GET DIARRHEA IN THE FIRST PLACE?

One way that bacterial infections such as Typhoid, Salmonella and Shigella are spread is through food or drink beverages that have been handled by a person who is shedding the bacteria. The bacteria are shed by carriers in their stool without their knowledge. When proper hand washing is not followed these carriers can contaminate your food or drink as they come in contact with it.



Another way bacterial infections are transmitted is when contaminated sewage gets into the water you use for drinking or washing food.

Once the bacteria has been eaten or drunk, they multiply and spread into the bloodstream where the body reacts with fever, diarrhea etc.

Parasites are spread in the same manner as listed above (through contaminated food and water). However, they can also be "picked up" from contaminated surfaces and recreational water as well. Surfaces to worry about would be toys, bathroom fixtures and changing tables. Recreational water would include swimming pools, hot tubs, Jacuzzis and fountains.

**PLEASE NOTE**

- Most carriers are NOT symptomatic. That is why they may be less vigilant with hand washing. For example, the parasite Giardia and the bacteria Typhoid can be shed for weeks after the individuals symptoms have ended. Others who are carriers were never symptomatic (never had diarrhea, felt ill, etc.) to begin with.
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports that 1 out of 3 people DO NOT wash their hands after using the washroom.

**PREVENTION**

HAND-WASHING can not be emphasized enough! After you use the washroom and before you eat a meal.

- Wash the surfaces in your home regularly
- Use uncontaminated water to wash all food that is to be eaten raw. Avoid eating uncooked food and ordering ice in your drinks when dining in risky restaurants.
- Make sure that any staff in your home follows the same hygiene guidelines.
- You may want to consider a health check (stool examination) for you and your staff to see if you might be a carrier.
- And finally, make sure your Typhoid vaccination is up to date!

