

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is loose, watery and more-frequent bowel movements. Usually lasts from 2 days to 2 weeks. Sometimes diarrhea can be chronic which can indicate a more serious problem.

Frequent Signs & Symptoms

Abdominal cramping is common with diarrhea, other symptoms may include:

- Loose, watery stools
- Fever
- Blood or mucus in the stool
- Bloating
- Nausea
- Urgent need to have a bowel movement

Causes

Diarrhea can be caused by:

- Viruses
- Bacteria and parasites
- Medications
- Lactose intolerance
- Fructose or artificial sweeteners
- Surgery

Prevention

Wash your hands to prevent the spread of viral diarrhea.

To ensure adequate hand-washing:

- Wash frequently
- Lather with soap for at least 20 seconds
- Use hand sanitizer when washing isn't possible

Diagnosis

Diarrhea is usually a self-diagnosis. If symptoms persist, you will need to see your healthcare provider who will take a history and perform a physical exam. They may also order laboratory tests.

Complications

Diarrhea can cause dehydration. Symptoms of dehydration can include:

- Excessive thirst
- Dry mouth or skin
- Little or no urination
- Weakness, dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fatigue
- Dark-colored urine

Treatment

Diarrhea generally goes away in a few days without treatment. Until you feel better, rest, drink enough fluids, watch what you eat and remember to stay hydrated as dehydration is common with diarrhea.

- Drink clear liquids
 - Water
 - Broth
 - Sports drinks such as Gatorade
 - Fruit juice
- BRAT diet is suggested which includes:
 - Bananas
 - Rice (white)
 - Applesauce
 - Toast
- Some other good choices include:
 - Potatoes
 - Plain crackers
- Avoid foods that can make diarrhea worse, like:
 - Fatty or fried foods
 - Raw fruits and vegetables
 - Spicy foods
 - Caffeinated drinks
 - Beans

Your provider may suggest an OTC medication

When to See Your Healthcare Provider

- Your diarrhea lasts more than two days
- You become dehydrated
- You have severe abdominal or rectal pain
- You have bloody or black stools
- You have a fever of more than 102 F (39 C)

If symptoms worsen or do not improve, return to the clinic.

If you have worsening of symptoms when the Health and Wellness Center is unavailable, please follow up with the local ER or Urgent Care.