



Diarrhea and Vomiting Illness

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is frequent loose stools, often caused by an infection.

What is vomit?

Vomiting (**throwing up**) is the forceful expulsion of the contents of one's stomach through the mouth and sometimes the nose.

What common infections can cause diarrhea or vomiting?

Some common infections are caused by Salmonella, Shigella, Campylobacter, Giardia, and certain viruses, e.g.: Rotavirus, Norovirus.

How can a person become ill?

A person can become ill by eating or drinking contaminated food or water, contact with another ill person, contact with infected surfaces, and in some instances contact with infected animals.

How can I prevent the spread of these infections?

You can help to prevent the spread of infection by following these general precautions:

- **Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or hand sanitizer** after using the toilet, changing diapers, or disposing of animal feces.
- **Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or hand sanitizer** before eating or food preparation, and after handling raw meat.

- **Washing** fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- **Cooking and storing** food appropriately. Keep hot food hot (at 140 degrees F or above), and cold food refrigerated (at 40 degrees F or below.) Protect food from insects.
- **Using bottled water when traveling** in countries where the water supply might be unsafe. In Bermuda, the Department of Health recommends that tank water be disinfected before it is used for drinking or food preparation – common methods include boiling, Ultraviolet light, and chlorination.

You can help to prevent transmission if you or a family member is ill by:

- **Flushing or discarding any vomit** and/or stool in the toilet and making sure that the surrounding area is kept clean.
- **Immediately removing and washing clothing or linens** that may be contaminated.
- **Disinfecting contaminated surfaces**, e.g.: kitchen counters, bathroom surfaces.

And also:

- **Persons who have symptoms of vomiting and diarrhea should not attend work and should not handle food for others while ill.**
- **Professional food handlers** should consult their physician or the Department of Health before returning to work. Food that may have been contaminated by an ill person should be disposed of properly.
- **Children with diarrhea and or vomiting** should not attend school or day care center until 48 hours from the last episode of diarrhea.
- **Children in diapers with diarrhea** should not use wading/swimming pools.

Updated: August 10 2016.