

## Diarrhea reference chart

Diarrhea can be caused by bacteria, parasites, or viruses. This chart gives information about some of the specific causes of diarrhea. It is a supplement to the general education sheet “Diarrhea.” **Fecal-oral transmission** means that the organism is swallowed from feces (bowel movement or stool) on the hands, or in food or beverages that have been contaminated by feces.

| Cause                            | How did my child get it?   | Signs   | How long contagious?  | Treatment?                              |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Campylobacter (bacteria)         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contaminated food such as poultry, water, or unpasteurized milk</li> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea; may be bloody</li> <li>abdominal pain</li> <li>fever</li> </ul>  | <p>Most contagious while diarrhea lasts, but may continue after diarrhea stops</p> <p>May return to day care when diarrhea has stopped</p>                                    | Helpful if given early during infection |
| Clostridium difficile (bacteria) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>spores in environment</li> <li>risk increased when intestinal flora altered (such as with antibiotic therapy)</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>abdominal cramps</li> <li>diarrhea; may contain blood, mucus, or pus</li> <li>abdominal tenderness</li> <li>fever</li> </ul> | <p>As long as diarrhea lasts</p> <p>May return to day care when diarrhea has stopped</p>  | May or may not be necessary             |
| Cryptosporidium (parasite)       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pets, farm livestock</li> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>contaminated water</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>watery diarrhea</li> <li>abdominal pain, gas</li> <li>vomiting</li> <li>may have no signs</li> </ul>                         | <p>Several weeks after diarrhea is gone</p> <p>May return to day care after diarrhea has stopped, but exclude from swimming for 2 weeks after diarrhea is gone</p>            | None proven                             |
| Escherichia coli (bacteria)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fecal-oral transmission (human or animal feces)</li> <li>contaminated food or beverages (such as undercooked beef, or unpasteurized milk or apple cider)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea; may be bloody</li> <li>abdominal pain</li> <li>fever</li> </ul>  | <p>Most contagious while diarrhea lasts, but may continue after diarrhea stops</p> <p>May return to day care after 2 negative stool cultures (taken at least 1 day apart)</p> | Usually not                             |

| Cause                                   | How did my child get it?   | Signs   | How long contagious?  | Treatment?  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Giardia (parasite)                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contaminated water or food</li> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>pets (dogs, cats)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea; may be watery, gassy, or foul-smelling</li> <li>abdominal pain</li> <li>loss of appetite</li> <li>may have no signs</li> </ul> | <p>Varies; may last for months, even after diarrhea is gone</p> <p>May return to day care after diarrhea has stopped</p>  | Yes, antiparasitic  |
| Rotavirus or Norwalk-like virus (virus) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>other transmission methods are being studied</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea</li> <li>vomiting</li> <li>low-grade fever</li> </ul>   | <p>Usually 4 to 10 days; see education sheet "Rotavirus"</p> <p>May return to day care after fever and vomiting stop, stool is not watery or leaking out of diapers, and child is acting normally</p> | No  |
| Salmonella (bacteria)                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contaminated poultry, meat, eggs, unpasteurized milk, or water</li> <li>contact with infected animals (turtles, iguanas, or other reptiles)</li> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea; may be bloody</li> <li>abdominal cramps or pain</li> <li>fever</li> <li>may not have symptoms</li> </ul>                       | <p>Varies; may be months</p> <p>May return to day care after diarrhea has stopped</p>   | No, except for infants younger than 3 months, or for patients with reduced immune state |
| Shigella (bacteria)                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fecal-oral transmission</li> <li>contaminated water or food</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>diarrhea (watery, sometimes with mucus or blood)</li> <li>fever</li> <li>abdominal cramps or pain</li> </ul>                             | <p>Usually less than 4 weeks</p> <p>May return to day care after 24 hours of antibiotic treatment and diarrhea has stopped</p>  | Yes   |

## Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the clinic.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: [www.childrensmn.org](http://www.childrensmn.org).