

Frontline healthcare fact sheet

Infectious diarrhea in the healthcare setting

What causes infectious diarrhea?

Diarrhea can have many causes. Sometimes diarrhea can be caused by germs that can spread from person to person. Some common germs that cause infectious diarrhea include: norovirus, *C. difficile*, *E. coli*, or shigella, just to name a few.

How do you get infectious diarrhea?

Infectious diarrhea can be caused by many things like eating undercooked or contaminated food, drinking infected water, not washing hands prior to eating or preparing food, and direct person to person contact.

What are the signs and symptoms of infectious diarrhea?

Infectious diarrhea usually includes loose, watery stool that can sometimes be combined with vomiting, fever, and stomach pain, but not always. Sometimes the stool may be bloody or have an increased/different odor.

How is infectious diarrhea treated?

It's very important to stay hydrated to prevent dehydration. Increased fluid intake should be prioritized. Additional treatment depends on what is causing the infectious diarrhea. Sometimes an antibiotic is needed to treat the infection,

other times the infectious diarrhea may need to just run its course.

What actions can prevent the spread of infectious diarrhea in my facility?

Washing hands often and especially before you eat, handle food, after you go to the bathroom, and after you handle raw meat. Increased cleaning is also recommended while a resident or patient has confirmed or suspected infectious diarrhea. Some germs are only killed by bleach or other special products.

Patients or residents with infectious diarrhea should remain in their rooms and healthcare workers should wear a gown and gloves to care for them. Healthcare workers should throw away used gowns and gloves and wash their hands when they leave the room.

Where can I get more information?

- [CDC Symptoms of food poisoning](#)
- [CDC Norovirus](#)
- [CDC C. diff](#)