

## **Infectious Diarrhea (including Enterovirus, Rotavirus, Norwalkvirus, Campylobacter, Salmonella, Shigella, E. Coli, Cholera, Giardia, Ameba)**

**What is infectious diarrhea?** It is an intestinal infection caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites. It is the most common cause of diarrhea. Symptoms include:

- Stools that are loose, watery, frequent, foul-smelling, mucousy, bloody
- Stomach cramps, nausea, and vomiting
- Fever, headache, and fatigue

Although infectious diarrhea is usually mild, it can be dangerous for:

- *Infants and toddlers-they can get dehydrated*
- *Seniors and people with immune problems (e.g., HIV/AIDS, cancer chemotherapy, organ transplant, taking steroid medication)*

**How does infectious diarrhea spread?** It spreads by:

- Touching stool when diapering and toileting
- Not washing hands before handling food
- Not cleaning/disinfecting toys and diapering, toileting and hand-washing areas
- Playing in wading pools and water-play tables
- Drinking contaminated water and eating shellfish in areas with inadequate sewage treatment
- Eating under-cooked poultry, beef, and eggs

**When is infectious diarrhea contagious?** Depending on the type of infection:

- Usually in the one or two days *before* the start of symptoms until the diarrhea ends and/or treatment is completed.
- After exposure, it can take one day to weeks to get sick.

**How do I know if my child has infectious diarrhea?** If your child has severe symptoms, bloody stool, signs of dehydration, or doesn't get better within two to three days, see your doctor. Infectious diarrhea is diagnosed by the symptoms and tests of stool.

**What should I do if my child has infectious diarrhea?**

**Treatment:** Follow your doctor's recommendations:

- Help your child recover by offering:
  - plenty of clear liquids to drink (e.g., broth, rice water, gelatin)
  - bland food (e.g., bananas, rice, applesauce, toast, crackers, noodles, tortillas)-avoid milk products.
  - breast milk for breastfed babies
- For severe symptoms or infection from bacteria or parasites, antibiotic medication and sometimes hospitalization and rehydration are needed. .

**Keep your child home:** until the diarrhea is resolved. If it's a bacterial or parasite infection, the child must have received the appropriate treatment. Notify your Head Start program immediately.

**To limit the spread:**

- Report outbreaks to the local health department.

**COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO**  
**HEAD START-PRESCHOOL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**  
250 South Lena Road, San Bernardino, CA 92415  
(909) 387-2363 · FAX (909) 387-3313 · <http://hss.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/psd/>

- Wash hands after diapering and toileting and before cooking and eating.

### **Infectious Diarrhea (continued)**

- Clean and disinfect diapering areas, mouthed toys, and dining tables after each use; clean and disinfect toileting areas and hand-washing sinks daily.
- Use sprinklers instead of wading pools. Use individual water-play basins instead of water-play tables. Do not drink from lakes, rivers, or pools.
- For perishable foods (poultry, meat, fish, eggs, and milk products):
- Cook thoroughly until juices run clear.
- Serve immediately or refrigerate-Don't let stand at room temperature.