Diarrhea Flow Chart

Source: FamilyDoctor.com

2. Did your symptoms begin 30 minutes to 2 hours after eating or drinking dairy products?

Yes

Your symptoms may be caused by LACTOSE INTOLERANCE. People who have this condition have trouble digesting the sugar in milk and other dairy products.

If you think you have lactose intolerance, talk to your doctor. He or she may recommend taking lactase enzyme tablets or drops to help prevent problems. Also, avoid eating or drinking foods and beverages that make you sick.

3. Have you eaten food that might be spoiled, or did someone else eat the same food and become ill too?

Yes

You may have FOOD POISONING. Other symptoms of food poisoning may include headache, fever and chills, and weakness.

Most problems caused by food poisoning will clear up within 12 to 48 hours. In the meantime, drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Children should be given an oral rehydration solution (ORS). Avoid solid foods until the diarrhea goes away.

If your symptoms last longer than 48 hours, or you're very uncomfortable, call your doctor.

4. Have you traveled recently to another country?

Yes

You may have TRAVELER'S DIARRHEA, which is caused by contaminated food or drink.

5. Do you have pain in the lower left side of your abdomen, especially after you eat foods that are difficult to digest?

Yes

You may have a condition that affects the intestines, such as DIVERTICULOSIS or DIVERTICULITIS.

See your doctor. A diet high in FIBER may help relieve your symptoms.

6. Is your diarrhea watery, and do you have a headache or muscle aches and a low fever?

Yes

You may have viral GASTROENTERITIS, also called the stomach flu.

Get plenty of rest. Children who have gastroenteritis should be given an oral rehydration solution (ORS) to prevent dehydration. Ease back into eating with bland foods and clear liquids.

Contact your doctor if you have a high fever or your symptoms last for more than 10 days.

7. Do you have persistent severe abdominal cramps, gas and watery diarrhea followed by greasy stools?

Yes

You may have a form of BACTERIAL DIARRHEA or a parasite (GIARDIA).

Call your doctor promptly. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Avoid caffeine.

8. Do you have a fever, and are you experiencing pain in the middle or upper abdomen that radiates to your back?

Yes

These may be symptoms of GALLBLADDER DISEASE or PANCREATITIS.

9. Are you bloated, and are you experiencing severe lower abdominal pain or cramping?

Yes

These could be symptoms of a problem such as an INTESTINAL OBSTRUCTION or blockage.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY, OR GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY ROOM.

10. Are you currently taking an antibiotic or other new medicine?

Yes

Your diarrhea may be caused by the MEDICINE.

Talk to your doctor about the antibiotic or medicine you're taking. He or she may be able to prescribe a medicine that won't cause diarrhea. However, don't stop taking your current medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

11. Do you have diarrhea along with gas, bloating and stomach pains every time you eat certain foods?

MALABSORPTION problems, such as CELIAC DISEASE, can cause food-related diarrhea.

Avoid the foods that make you sick, and discuss the problem with your doctor.

12. Do you have frequent bowel movements mixed with blood or mucus, and abdominal pain and cramping?

You may have INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE or CROHN'S DISEASE

See your doctor. He or she will determine what treatment is right for you. Drink plenty of fluids, and avoid foods that make your symptoms worse.

13. Do your bowel movements alternate between constipation and diarrhea, and does your condition seem to get worse when you're under stress?

Yes

IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME or SPASTIC COLON may be the cause of your diarrhea.

Gradually increase the amount of <a href="/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/food-nutrition/nutrients/fiber-how-to-increase-the-amount-in-your-diet.html">FIBER in your diet, and drink plenty of fluids. If you see blood in your stools, call your doctor.

14. Have you had chronic constipation but suddenly experienced watery diarrhea that leaks out?

You may have a FECAL IMPACTION, a large mass of dry, hard stool that is trapped in the rectum.

See your doctor.

No