

# DIARRHOEA: MESSAGES

LAST UPDATE: MARCH 2022

## About the Message Library

People affected by disaster must have access to timely, appropriate and accurate information to help them keep themselves and their families safe and well. They should know their rights, entitlements and be able to give feedback. Responders have a duty to put in place appropriate, systematic and coordinated mechanisms to ensure this.

Our Message Library offers clear, concise and simple messages on a range of topics as templates for you to adapt and use in the context you are working in. These are intended to help you make a quick start on communicating with communities while you further develop mechanisms for on-going dialogue with diverse groups within each community.

For help contextualising and using the messages we recommend you do our e-learning course and read the following technical guidance.

### E-learning

<https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=768>

### Guidance

<https://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-guidance/cdac-message-library-user-guidance>

## What is diarrhoea

You have diarrhoea when you pass more than three watery stools per day. Severe diarrhoea is particularly dangerous in children and makes them vulnerable to disease.

## Cause of diarrhoea

Diarrhoea can be caused by unclean water, unsafe food, dirty hands and or contact with stools of sick people. A significant proportion of diarrhoeal disease can be prevented through safe drinking-water and adequate sanitation and hygiene.

## How to prevent diarrhoea

Good hygiene is important as it keeps away disease such as diarrhoea. You can prevent diarrhoea by using safe drinking water and washing hands with soap thoroughly before eating, feeding your child and preparing food and after defecation. If there is no soap available you can use ash and running water. You should also dispose of all faeces safely by burying it or covering it up. Exclusive breastfeeding is protective and prevents diarrhoea from occurring in young children. Breastfeeding also reduces the severity of diarrhoea.

## When to contact a health worker

If your child has frequent watery stools (such as more than three per day) or if there is blood in their faeces, they may have severe diarrhoea that needs medical treatment. Contact your nearest health facility immediately. If you have frequent watery stools (such as more than three per day), or there is blood in your faeces, you may have a more serious type of diarrhoea that needs immediate treatment. Visit your nearest health facility immediately. Contact [insert info] for more information.

## Where to find oral rehydration solution (ORS) and instructions for use

Packets of oral rehydration solution (ORS) can be found in most shops, markets, and pharmacies. If you have a packet of ORS, do the following: 1. Wash your hands with soap (or ash) and water before preparing the mixture. 2. Put the contents of the ORS packet in a clean covered container. Add one litre of clean water and stir. Too little water could make the diarrhoea worse. 3. Add water only. Do not add ORS to milk, soup, fruit juice or soft drinks. Do not add sugar. 4. Stir well, and drink it/feed it to the child from a clean cup. Do not use a bottle. 5. You can use this mixture for up to 24 hours after you have made it. After this any unused mixture must be thrown away.

### How to make oral rehydration solution (ORS)

To make oral hydration solution at home (ORS), do the following: Stir half a small spoon of salt and 4 big spoons of sugar into 1 litre (5 cups = 1 litre) of safe water until they are dissolved. Give a little bit of the solution to your child, either using a cup or a spoon, regularly and continuously, especially after each loose stool. If the child still needs hydrating after 24 hours, make a fresh solution. If the child vomits, wait ten minutes and give it ORS again. Usually vomiting will stop. Banana or other non-sweetened mashed fruit can help provide essential nutrients. If diarrhoea increases and /or vomiting persist, take child to a health clinic. This home made solution does not stop the diarrhoea. It prevents the body from drying up. The diarrhoea should stop by itself.

### How to make ORS at home for adults

If you have diarrhoea, you can replace lost fluids by drinking a special solution called ORS. To make ORS at home, do the following: Stir half a small spoon of salt and six level small spoons of sugar in one litre of safe water until dissolved. Drink it regularly and continue to eat solid food. This home-made solution does not stop the diarrhoea. It prevents the body from drying up. If diarrhoea increases and /or vomiting persist, go to your nearest health clinic.

### How to treat diarrhoea in babies that are breastfed

If your baby has diarrhoea and is less than 6 months old, continue breastfeeding them. Breastfeed them more often if possible (at least every 3 hours or more). For babies older than 6 months, continue to breastfeed, and also give them a special solution called ORS. This replenishes lost fluids and helps them get better.

### Self care at home

If you have diarrhoea, continue eating and drinking safe water regularly. When you are recovering try to eat more food than usual as this will help your body get better. Any child older than 6 months suffering from diarrhoea should be fed an additional meal a day if possible and plenty of safe drinking water.

### Breastfeeding to prevent diarrhoea

Exclusive breastfeeding is protective and prevents diarrhoea from occurring in young children. Breastfeeding also reduces the severity of diarrhoea.

## REFERENCES

For more information on this topic, we recommend you read the following references.

World Health Organization (2022). **Diarrhoea**  
[https://www.who.int/health-topics/diarrhoea#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/diarrhoea#tab=tab_1)

**HELP US KEEP THE LIBRARY UP TO DATE**

**If you would like to contribute to topic reviews, have found a message that needs greater clarity, or wish to create a new topic, please contact us at [info@cdacnetwork.org](mailto:info@cdacnetwork.org).**