

Diarrhoea

Mummy: My tummy is roaring like a lion and hurts!



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Today Ahmed is not feeling well. This morning he woke up like any other day, but after breakfast he noticed how his tummy was roaring like a lion and he felt a strange sensation that he had never felt before. After several roars, his tummy started to hurt a bit and he felt the urge to go to the toilet. As Ahmed is a big boy, he quickly went to the toilet and pooped, and the pain quickly disappeared. Now he was feeling better, but he saw that, instead of the sausage-shaped poo that Ahmed usually makes, this time it was liquid like water and had some small brown



pieces floating in it. Worried, he called his mum, and she told him he had diarrhoea.

What is diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea is when our poo becomes liquid like water or mush. Although sometimes we only notice this change, diarrhoea is often accompanied by other unpleasant sensations such as a tummy ache or an urge to vomit. Sometimes we may also have a fever.

Why do we have diarrhoea?

Diarrhoea can have many culprits, but most of the time it is caused by the attack of microorganisms (viruses, bacteria, parasites) on the stomach and intestine, which are the places where our body absorbs food and creates poo. Our gut is full of microorganisms, almost all of them our friends that help us digest our food, but once in a while, unfriendly microorganisms, so-called pathogens, enter the gut, usually following the same path as the food. When they do this, they may take the opportunity to attack our intestines and make them do the opposite to what they usually do: instead of absorbing and keeping the water we drink, they throw it away and make it come out with the poo. So, we have a poo with a lot more water in it than normal.

If I have diarrhoea and I go to the doctor, what will he or she do?

When we have diarrhoea, doctors will ask us questions and examine us to see how we are and how they can help us. They will ask us how long the diarrhoea has been going on, if we feel like vomiting or are vomiting, if we have a fever, if we are not having enough wee-wee. Then they will

A child-centric microbiology education framework

examine us to see if there are any places in our tummy that hurt, if our mouth is very dry or if we have any other problems. With just these questions and this examination, our doctor will be able to help us.

What is the treatment for diarrhoea?

The big problem for us when we have diarrhoea is that our bodies lose a lot of water and salts, and we may become dehydrated: our bodies have less water than they need. Diarrhoea therefore has one main treatment: drinking water to get as much water into your body as is passed in your poo. To help us feel better, our doctor and our parents will ask us to drink water or saline (a kind of very rich juice that helps our body to recover). In addition, our doctor may give us a syrup with bacteria that can fight the micro-organisms that are attacking us.

What can I do to avoid diarrhoea?

Luckily there is a way to avoid diarrhoea most of the time: before eating or putting our hands in our mouths we have to wash our hands with soap and water. With this easy trick we can forget about diarrhoea! In addition, try not to eat things that have fallen on the floor or have gone bad (for example, fruit that has gone bad because no one has eaten it for a long time in the kitchen).



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