

before eating. Washing your hands is especially important if you know there is a disease going around. Keeping bathroom surfaces clean can also help to prevent infections. Food and water can also spread germs that cause diarrhea. To help protect yourself, cook foods thoroughly and wash raw fruits and vegetables well before eating them. Avoid eating undercooked hamburgers and poultry or raw eggs, and always refrigerate leftover food quickly. Make sure to clean your kitchen counters and cooking utensils, especially after they have been in contact with raw meat, eggs, and poultry.

Pets, particularly reptiles, can also spread germs. (Reptiles include animals like lizards, snakes, and turtles.) Pets should be kept away from family eating areas. Never wash pet cages or bowls in the same sink that your family uses to prepare meals. And always wash your hands after handling your pet!

How Are These Infections Treated?

Most infections that cause diarrhea will go away without treatment. Resting at home and drinking plenty of fluids to avoid **dehydration** are the best ways to get over the illness. Dehydration means your body does not have all the fluids (water) it needs. Sometimes doctors tell people to treat the symptoms of diarrhea by taking medicines to make their **stools** less watery. Other times diarrhea needs to be treated with **antibiotics**, or drugs that kill some germs.

Stop and Think

1. The effects of an illness in your body are called symptoms. One symptom of a cold is a runny nose. What are the symptoms of gastrointestinal infections?
2. How do gastrointestinal infections spread?
3. How can you keep from getting a gastrointestinal infection?
4. You have learned a little about one gastrointestinal infection. Based on the reading, how can you make a good friend sick with a gastrointestinal infection?
5. What is one way you can prevent your good friend from getting sick with a gastrointestinal infection?

stool: the solid waste that is produced by the body.
antibiotic: a type of medicine that kills germs or prevents them from growing



Pets such as this bearded dragon can spread germs.

