

INFECTIOUS DIARRHEA: SCREENING TOOL

Trigger: A decrease in consistency (soft or liquid) and an increase in frequency of bowel movements to ≥ 3 stools per day should trigger concern for infectious diarrhea.

DEFINITIONS

Diarrhea – an alteration in normal bowel movement characterized by an increase in the water content, volume, and frequency of stools.

Infectious Diarrhea – diarrhea due to an infectious etiology, often accompanied by symptoms of nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain.

Acute Diarrhea – an episode of diarrhea of ≤ 14 days.

Persistent Diarrhea – diarrhea of ≥ 14 days.

Chronic Diarrhea – diarrhea of > 30 days.

THE BRISTOL STOOL SCALE

- Type 1  Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
- Type 2  Sausage-shaped but lumpy
- Type 3  Like a sausage, but with cracks on the surface
- Type 4  Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft
- Type 5  Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
- Type 6  Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
- Type 7  Watery, no solid pieces (entirely liquid)

This material was prepared by Health Quality Innovators (HQI), a Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization (QIN-QIO) under contract with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of CMS or HHS, and any reference to a specific product or entity herein does not constitute endorsement of that product or entity by CMS or HHS. 12SOW/HQI/QIN-QIO-0391-12/21/22

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CLINICAL FEATURES

- Fever
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting and/or nausea
- Bloody stool
- Involuntary spasm or straining

RISK FACTORS

- Travel to a developing area
- Day-care center attendance or employment
- Resident of long-term care facility
- Consumption of unsafe foods (raw meats, eggs, or shellfish; unpasteurized milk) or swimming in/drinking untreated fresh surface water
- Recent visit to a farm or petting zoo or having contact with reptiles
- Exposure to other persons with diarrhea
- Medications (antibiotics, antacids, or antimotility agents)
- Medical conditions that predispose to infectious diarrhea (AIDS, prior gastrectomy, extremes of age)
- Occupation as a food-handler or caregiver

DOCUMENTATION

- When and how the illness began (abrupt or gradual onset and duration of symptoms)
- Use the Bristol Stool Scale to describe stool characteristics (include bloody, mucous, purulent, or greasy appearance)
- Frequency of bowel movements and quality of stool
- Symptoms of dehydration (thirst, fast heart rate, dizziness, decreased urination, lethargy, decreased skin turgor)
- Other symptoms (fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, cramps, headache, myalgias, altered sensorium)



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