



07. Assessment of dehydration

Last update: 2024-08-08

Overview

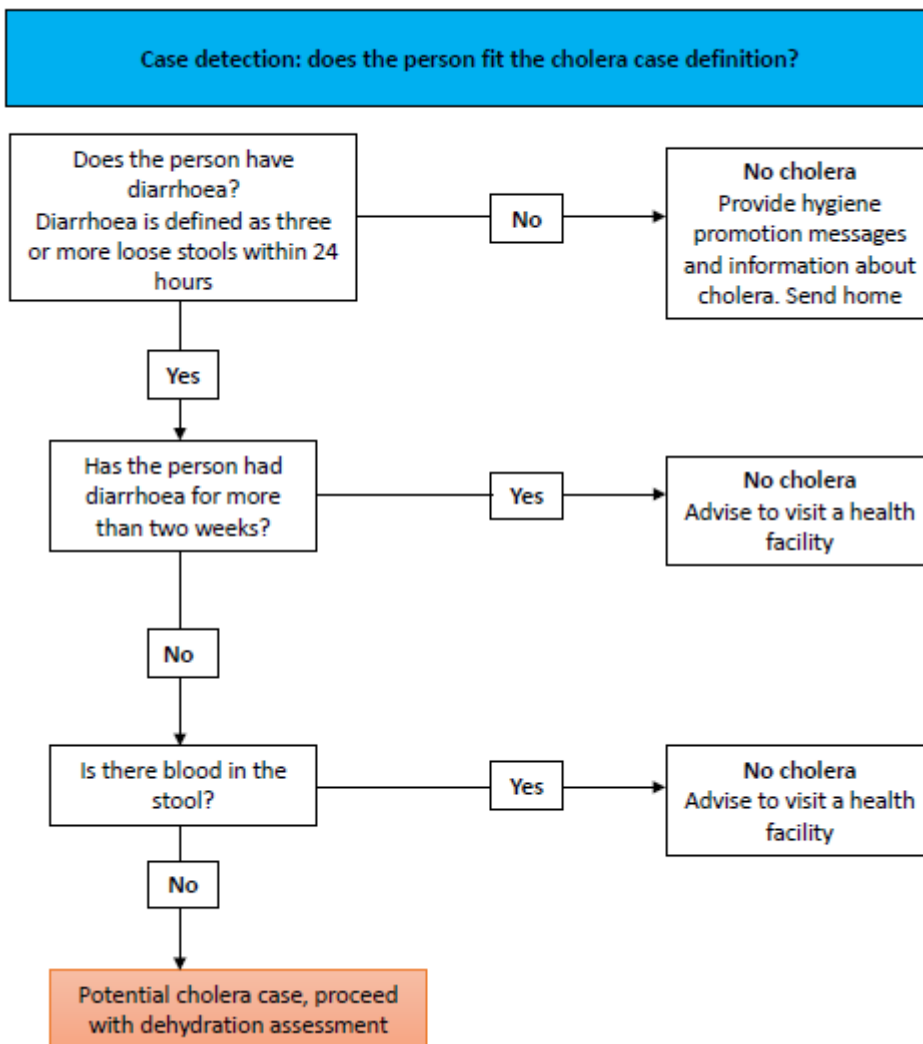
People with diarrhoea, especially children, can lose a lot of fluid from their bodies and suffer dehydration.

Dehydration can cause very severe illness and sometimes death, especially in association with acute watery diarrhoea and cholera.






** Caution is required towards people who show signs of malnutrition. A child or adult that has red or yellow mid upper arm circumference (MUAC) measure should be referred **immediately** to a health facility for treatment or prevention of dehydration. ** (See Action tools [Measuring acute malnutrition in emergencies](#) and [Measuring mid upper arm circumference](#) for further information on MUAC and on malnutrition)

What to do and how to do it

First, detect whether the person may be a potential cholera case:



Second, assess the degree of dehydration and take the following actions:

Assessing dehydration status				
It is a person with acute watery diarrhoea who had three or more loose stools (non-bloody) within a 24-hour period		Assessing dehydration		
		No dehydration	Some dehydration (Person has two or more of the signs below)	Severe dehydration (Person has two or more of the signs below)
Look at or ask	 General condition	Well, alert, able to talk, sit up and answer questions	Restless, irritable. Less alert, still able to speak	Does not react/reacts little or unconscious; floppy
	 Tears	Eyes moist and tears present	Absent	Absent
	 Mouth and tongue	Moist	Dry	Very dry – like sandpaper
	 Thirst	Not thirsty, but drinks	Thirsty, drinks eagerly	Drinks poorly or not able to drink
Feel	 Skin pinch	Goes back quickly	Goes back slowly (2–3 seconds)	Goes back very slowly or remains in place (>3 seconds)
Action plan:		Follow Plan A*	Follow Plan B*	Refer immediately to a health facility

*Plan A and Plan B are detailed in the Action Tool *Giving Oral Rehydration Solutions (ORS)*.



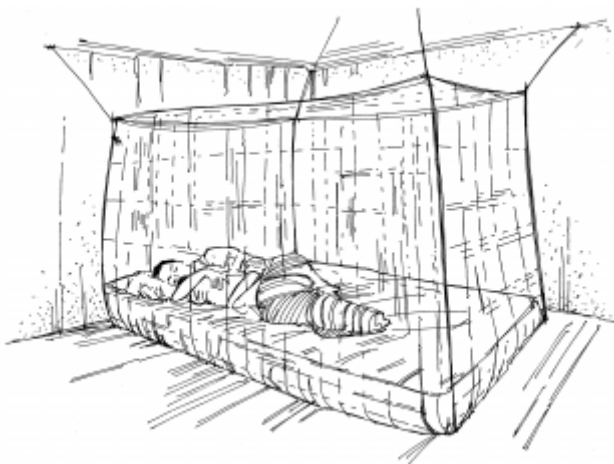
Community messages



01. Preparing and giving oral rehydration solution (ORS)



03. Breastfeeding



17. Sleeping under mosquito nets