



# 07. Assessment of dehydration

Last update: 2024-08-08

## Overview

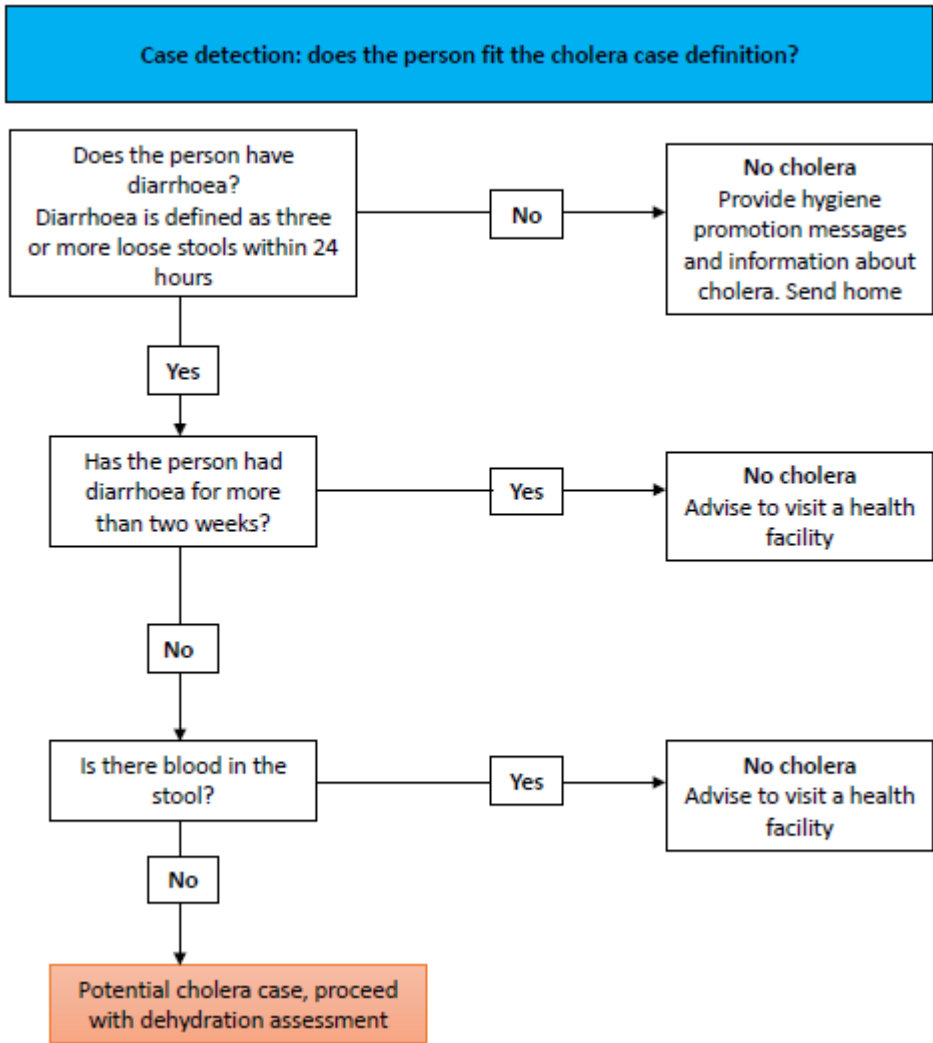
People with diarrhoea, especially children, can lose a lot of fluid from their bodies and suffer dehydration.

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<br>(Person has two or more of the signs below) | Severe dehydration<br>(Person has two or more of the signs below) |
| <b>Look at or ask</b>  | <br><b>General condition</b> | 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               |
|  | <br><b>Tears</b>             | Eyes moist and tears present                           | Absent  | Absent  |
|  | <br><b>Mouth and tongue</b>  | Moist  | Dry   | Very dry – like sandpaper   |
|  | <br><b>Thirst</b>           | Not thirsty, but drinks                                | Thirsty, drinks eagerly   | Drinks poorly or not able to drink                                |
| <b>Feel</b>  | <br><b>Skin pinch</b>      | Goes back quickly                                      | Goes back slowly (2–3 seconds)                                  | Goes back very slowly or remains in place (>3 seconds)            |
| <b>Action plan:</b>  |   | 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)*.



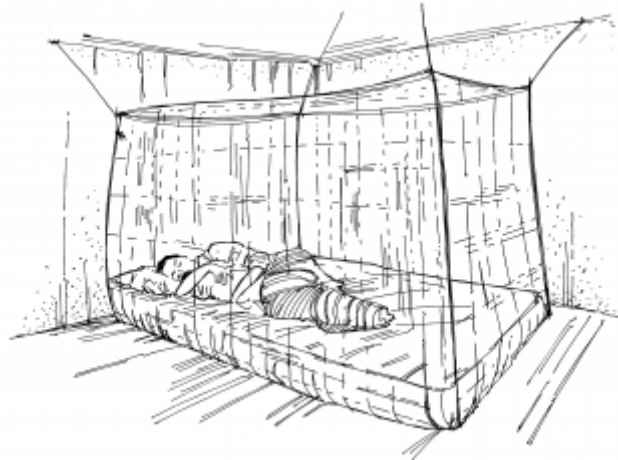
# Community messages



01. Preparing and giving oral rehydration solution (ORS)



03. Breastfeeding



17. Sleeping under mosquito nets