**WELTON FAMILY HEALTH CENTRE**

**What do I do if?**

**I have diarrhoea**

**Diarrhoea is passing loose watery stools more times than usual. It may also be accompanied by some stomach ache and nausea/ vomiting. Most cases of diarrhoea are caused by mild infection – gastroenteritis. This can be caused by a variety of different organisms including viruses, bacteria or parasites – in this country usually a virus is the cause and this usually does not need treatment with antibiotics. Sometimes diarrhoea may result from eating or drinking infected water and food, on other occasions it may be passed directly from one person to another by contact or when an infected individual prepares food for others. In most cases the infection will clear up without any treatment over 2-5 days.**

**Contact the GP during the working day for advice if you have diarrhoea and any of the following:**

1. **You are over 60 years or under the age of 2**
2. **You have diabetes, particularly if this is treated by insulin**
3. **You have recently returned from abroad and the diarrhoea has been present for 4-5 days**
4. **You are unwell, pale , sweaty and faint**
5. **You are not passing urine**

**You may need to contact the GP urgently if you have:**

1. **The diarrhoea is associated with severe abdominal pain and the abdomen is tender to touch**
2. **There is blood mixed in with the stools**
3. **You become dehydrated**

**Fluids:**

**It is important to drink plenty of fluids if you have diarrhoea to replace any fluid which may be lost. Take frequent sips of water rather than large amounts at a time, particularly if you are vomiting. Proprietary rehydration fluids may be purchased from the pharmacy if necessary - you may also use diluted fruit juices. Avoid solid food until the symptoms settle, and when you feel like eating again try and avoid spicy or fatty foods, and keep to a light diet, including bread, potatoes, rice, fish and chicken.**

**Anti-diarrhoea Medicines:**

**These should not be used for children under 12. Avoid giving these initially since the diarrhoea is a method by which the body removes the infection. Loperamide slows down the passage of the stools through the gut and therefore allows time for more water to be absorbed and the stools are firmer as a result. Do not use Loperamide if you have a temperature or there is blood in the stools.**

**If you have abdominal pain with the diarrhoea you may use Paracetamol to treat this – it may also help with the diarrhoea.**

**Treatment with antibiotics is not usually recommended unless you have a specific infection such as Salmonella. Antibiotics may make the diarrhoea worse and have side effects – they will have no effect on a viral gastroenteritis.**

**To prevent the infection being transmitted to other people:**

1. **Wash your hands thoroughly after going to the toilet.**
2. **Avoid preparing food for others if you have diarrhoea**
3. **Stay away from work or from school until at least 24 hours after an episode of diarrhoea and vomiting.**
4. **Avoid sharing towels and flannels with people who are unaffected.**
5. **Ensure that toilets are regularly cleaned.**

**If you are breast feeding or bottle feeding continue to feed normally. If you are breast feeding, increase your fluid intake to maintain the milk supply. You may also add rehydration solutions if necessary.**