

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea, or diarrhea, as it is spelt in American English, is one of the most common ailments. Although it is especially common and even life-threatening in developing countries, it also causes problems in First World nations.

Diarrhoea can be treated effectively if diagnosed correctly. In most cases, it is caused by a pathogen entering the intestinal tract. Among these causes, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is one of the most common. IBS is a so-called functional gastrointestinal disorder. What causes IBS is unknown, but it has been connected to stress reaction in the body, which involves

the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis and the sympathetic nervous system. Other major causes are: lactose intolerance, acute gastrointestinal infections, damage to the intestinal microbiome or increase in intestinal bacteria, coeliac disease, and, most seriously, colon cancer.

PTA: Guten Morgen. Wie kann ich Ihnen behilflich sein?

Female customer: I'm sorry but my German isn't very good! Do you speak English?

Yes, of course. How may I help you?

This morning I had to go to the loo several times. And each time I had watery stool.

Do you mind me asking if you had anything unusual to eat or drink, yesterday?

Not at all.

Did you eat any dairy products?

I did, the first thing I thought was that I had had a reaction, you know lactose intolerance, but I had tests a few years ago and I do not have the intolerance.

And you have only had the diarrhoea this morning? Did you have anything to eat this morning, before it started?

No, I didn't. If it was food-poisoning, I believe it would have made itself noticed last night!

That's true. Do you have any other symptoms?

When I woke up this morning, I had a very bloated feeling, and shortly afterwards I had to run to the toilet!

Have you had this before, let's say in the last six months?

Not in the last six months, but last year pre-Covid-19, I had Montezuma's revenge while on holiday in South America.

Have you been prescribed antibiotics in the last two weeks or so? You see antibiotics can damage the intestinal flora and that might lead to problems with diarrhoea.

No, so what do you recommend? Should I take one of those anti-diarrhoea medications?

That wouldn't be good at this stage.

Why not?

The active ingredient, loperamide hydrochloride, causes bowel movement to slow down, which reduces the number of bowel movements and makes the stool less watery. As we don't know if your problem has been caused by a virus or bacteria, it might just prolong the infection and slow down the pathogens from leaving your body.

Oh my goodness! I hadn't thought of that!

What is important now is that you get enough fluids and electrolytes. We have these electrolyte sachets to help you re-hydrate and camomile tea to help settle your stomach. If you experience severe abdominal pain, fever or blood in your stool, please, go to a doctor immediately!

Thank you and goodbye. ■

*Catherine Croghan,
Lecturer in English and native speaker*

VOCABULARY

diarrhoea	Durchfall, Diarrhö
ailments	Erkrankungen
life-threatening	lebensbedrohlich
developing countries	Entwicklungsländer
intestinal tract	Darmtrakt
irritable bowel syndrome	Reizdarmsyndrom
gastrointestinal disorder	Magen-Darm-Störung
pituitary	Hypophyse, Hirnanhangdrüse
damage	Beschädigung
coeliac disease	Zöliakie
colon cancer	Dickdarmkrebs
loo	Klo
stool	Stuhlgang
food-poisoning	Lebensmittelvergiftung
bloated	aufgebläht
Montezuma's revenge	Montezumas Rache (ugs. für Diarrhöe)
active ingredient	Wirkstoff
prolong	(zeitlich) verlängern, hinauszögern
camomile tea	Kamillentee
severe	heftig
abdominal pain	Bauchschmerzen