



Fact Sheet – Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is caused by a variety of micro-organisms including viruses, bacteria and protozoans. Diarrhoea causes a person to lose both water and electrolytes, which leads to dehydration and, in some cases, to death.

About 4 billion cases of diarrhoea per year cause 1.8 million deaths, over 90 per cent of them (1.6 million) among children under five. Repeated episodes of diarrhoeal disease makes children more vulnerable to other diseases and malnutrition.

Diarrhoea is the most important public health problem directly related to water and sanitation. The simple act of washing hands with soap and water can cut diarrhoeal disease by one-third. Next to providing adequate sanitation facilities, it is the key to preventing waterborne diseases.