Investigation of Infectious Diarrhea

This algorithm applies to patients > 3 years-of-age presenting with suspected infectious diarrhea. It does not apply to the investigation of diarrhea in immunocompromised patients or in an outbreak situation.

**DIARRHEA**

- **Mild to Moderate**
  - Earlier stool testing is warranted for:
    - patients ≥ 70 years-of-age
    - severe abdominal pain
    - if *C. difficile*-associated disease is suspected

- **Severe (one or more of):**
  - fever ≥ 38.5° C
  - bloody stools
  - profound systemic illness/toxicity
  - hemodynamic instability
  - greater than 6 diarrheal episodes per day for greater than 5 days

**Duration ≤ 5 days**

- Recent antibiotic use? (< 3 mos.)
  - Yes
    - Consider *C. difficile* testing
    - Stool culture not recommended unless Public Health considerations
  - No
    - No initial investigations recommended unless Public Health considerations

**Duration > 5 days**

- Recent antibiotic use? (< 3 mos.) or Recent hospitalization? or Long-term care facility? or Bloody stool?
  - Yes
    - Stool culture
    - *C. difficile* testing
    - O&P testing if clinically indicated*
  - No
    - Stool culture
    - Consider *C. difficile* testing
    - O&P testing if clinically indicated*

**Investigate promptly**

- Stool culture
- *C. difficile* testing
- O&P testing if clinically indicated*

*At-risk for parasitic infection*
- travel to or immigration from an endemic area
- prolonged diarrhea (> 2 wks)
- consumption of unsafe food or untreated water
- children attending daycare
- swimming in unsafe water
- men who have sex with men

Note: Stool for viral pathogens are not routinely tested, but should be considered when an outbreak of viral gastroenteritis is suspected. Contact local Public Health for consultation.