

REPORT OVERVIEW

Diarrhea is Dangerous

Diarrheal disease is a major cause of death and illness.¹ It claims the lives of roughly half a million children under five each year and causes millions more to be hospitalized.^{2,3} Persistent infections in young children result in lifelong impairments.



Repeated diarrheal disease infections are holding children back from reaching their full potential.

Children living in poverty are subjected to an onslaught of environmental pathogens *every day*. These pathogens cause diarrhea and other asymptomatic infections, leading to chronic gut inflammation and putting children at risk of future infections and malnutrition.

Who is at risk?

Diarrheal disease is particularly dangerous in poor communities and places where safe water, sanitation, and access to basic medical care may be limited or unavailable.

What is the threat?

The state of the field is changing: death is not the only problem or biggest threat. Diarrhea can have debilitating, long-term consequences. Repeated illnesses in children contribute to a vicious cycle of malnutrition and infections, causing irreversible damage—such as physical stunting and deficiencies in cognitive development.

What is the burden?

Diarrhea limits potential for children, their families, and entire communities, keeping them locked in poverty.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

We know how to solve the problem.



In recent years, millions of children's lives have been saved. Deaths from diarrhea declined from more than **1 million among children under five years in 1990 to roughly 500,000 in 2015.**^{2,3} This is great news, but it means that half a million children still die from diarrhea each year, and countless more are held back because of persistent, repeated infections.

Diarrhea is not a new issue and remains a chronic problem in low- and middle-income countries; it is one of many menacing health threats competing for attention and funding.

We need to change the conversation from **surviving** to **thriving**.

→ **Urge** advocates, scientists, academics, researchers, donors, multilaterals, and national government leaders...

→ **To** prioritize diarrheal disease and stop the cycle...

→ **By** increasing awareness, making solutions available to everyone who needs them, and establishing diarrhea's long-term consequences as an urgent priority.

Because all children deserve the chance to be happy and healthy and live up to their full potential.

“ There is a risk that policymakers will shift their focus and resources away from diarrhea as deaths decline. However, the toll remains high, just more hidden, as children survive but suffer the lasting, devastating consequences of recurring infections. It is clear: persistent attention and advocacy are needed. ”

— Steve Davis, CEO, PATH

Stop the Cycle is a comprehensive resource with the latest research and evidence on diarrheal disease. The report addresses the challenge—child deaths and illnesses due to diarrhea—and solutions available to address diarrhea, including vaccines; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); breastfeeding and nutrition; oral rehydration solution (ORS) and zinc; and the innovative research underway to identify new interventions. It includes a call to action and outlines what's needed next to stop the devastating diarrheal disease cycle. DefeatDD will update the report as new information emerges. The report is intended to be used by advocates (including scientists, academics, and researchers), donors, multilaterals, and national government leaders to take action and join the movement to defeat diarrheal disease.



Stop the cycle of diarrhea. Give every child a healthy start.

The Defeat Diarrheal Disease (DefeatDD) Initiative is a PATH project.

For children in poor communities, diarrhea remains a major cause of death and can have lasting consequences. Simple and proven tools can prevent and treat diarrhea, and integrating them achieves the greatest impact. By joining these tools and our voices together, we can protect children everywhere from diarrheal disease.

Learn more at DefeatDD.org/state-of-the-field.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update*. Geneva: WHO; 2014. Available at http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/2004_report_update/en/.

² GBD data visualizations page. Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation website. Available at <http://www.healthdata.org/gbd/data-visualizations>. Accessed October 18, 2017.

³ Liu L, Oza S, Hogan D, et al. Global, regional, and national causes of under-5 mortality in 2000–15: an updated systematic analysis with implications for the Sustainable Development Goals. *The Lancet*. 2016;388(10063):3027–3035. Available at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673616315938>.