

## Diarrhea

Diarrhea is frequent, watery stools.

Diarrhea may happen due to cancer therapy, the disease itself, stress, infection, antibiotics, or problems with your body's ability to use food. If you have diarrhea for more than 24 hours, call your doctor or nurse. Having diarrhea for several days can cause dehydration, chemical imbalances in your blood, and low protein.

### What helps to decrease diarrhea:

- Eat a low fiber, high protein, high calorie diet:
  - Eggs
  - Yogurt, buttermilk, cheese
  - Rice pudding, custard, tapioca, gelatin
  - Smooth peanut butter
  - Cooked mild vegetables (beets, green beans, wax beans, carrots, peas)
  - Bananas, applesauce
  - Meat, fish, or poultry
- Avoiding irritating foods and fluids such as:
  - Whole grain bread and cereal
  - Nuts, seeds, coconut
  - Fried, greasy, or fatty food
  - Raw fruits and vegetables, fruit juices
  - Strong spices/herbs (chili powder, pepper, curry, garlic, olives, pickles)
  - Broccoli, onions, cabbage and other gas forming foods
  - Caffeine (chocolate, coffee, tea, soft drinks) and cigarettes
  - Alcoholic drinks
  - Foods that contain lactose, like milk or ice cream
  - Carbonated beverages (unless they lose their fizz)
  - Food high in simple sugars (candy bars, cookies, etc.)
- Eat small frequent meals and sip liquids slowly.
- Do not drink very hot or cold liquids. Chew foods slowly and avoid swallowing air if you

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- have problems with gas or bloating.
- Drink 8 to 10 large glasses of liquid daily. Gatorade, Exceed, and Yoo-hoo are fluids that help replace the chemicals in your blood.
  - Add nutmeg to foods. This may help slow the movement of muscles in your bowels.
  - Clean your rectal area with mild soap and water or moist towelettes. Desitin, A & D ointment, Aquaphor ointment or Nupercainal will help to protect your skin. A warm bath may be soothing as well.
  - Avoid using suppository medicines.
  - Get plenty of rest and decrease your activity. Do relaxing activities.
  - Do not take antacids that have magnesium, since these can increase diarrhea.
  - Take anti-diarrhea medicines as instructed by your doctor. Some medicines used for diarrhea are Pepto Bismal, Kaopectate, Imodium (Loperamide), or Donnagel.

**Report weakness and fatigue, or diarrhea for more than 24 hours to your doctor or nurse. Tell them how many stools you are having, the amount and color.**