

Diarrhea Management

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is having loose or watery stools three or more times in one day. Diarrhea may be caused by:

- Certain types of cancer
- Treatments such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation, surgery, and bone marrow or stem cell transplant
- Infections or inflammation of the bowels
- Certain medications including antibiotics and antacids containing magnesium
- Emotional stress or anxiety

Why is it important to manage?

Uncontrolled diarrhea can lead to weakness, dehydration, poor appetite, and weight loss.

Diarrhea Regimen

- Take 2 Imodium with your first loose stool. Take 1 Imodium with every following loose stool.
- With your doctor's permission, consider using a bulking agent containing psyllium fiber, such as Metamucil. Psyllium fiber helps diarrhea by absorbing water, which adds bulk to stool.
- For chronic diarrhea, try adding a banana flake product like Banatrol mixed with drinks or soft foods three times daily.

Call your doctor if you have diarrhea and any of the following:

- Diarrhea continues 24 hours or longer.
- Your stools have an unusual color.
- Symptoms include abdominal pain, blood and mucus in the stool, or fever.

- You are on immunotherapy. Immunotherapy-related toxicity requires immediate medical attention.

What to Do

- Take your antidiarrheal medications as prescribed.
- Drink plenty of mild and room temperature clear liquids throughout the day.
- Eat small meals and snacks instead of three large meals a day.
- Drink and eat high-sodium foods such as:
 - Broths, soups, sports drinks, crackers, and pretzels
- Drink and eat high-potassium foods such as:
 - Fruit juices, nectars, potatoes without skin, and bananas
- Eat foods high in pectin such as:
 - Applesauce and bananas
- Drink at least one cup of liquid after each loose stool.
- Eat low-fiber foods such as:
 - White bread, rice, potatoes, and eggs

What to Avoid

- Avoid greasy, fried, spicy, or very sweet foods.
- Try to limit milk and milk products as you may have trouble digesting them.
- Avoid drinks and foods that may cause gas such as:
 - Carbonated drinks, vegetables in the cabbage family, and dried beans and peas
- If you do want a carbonated drink, leave it open for 10 minutes or pour it into a glass and stir it to lessen the bubbles.
- Limit sugar-free gums or candies made with sorbitol, xylitol, or mannitol.
- Avoid high-fiber foods such as:
 - Whole-wheat breads, granola, raw fruits and vegetables, popcorn, and nuts
- Avoid beer, wine, and other drinks with alcohol.
- Avoid caffeinated beverages.

Food List for Managing Diarrhea

Type of Food	Recommended	Not Recommended
High-protein foods	- Baked or broiled beef, pork, chicken, liver, turkey, veal, or fish - Eggs - Low-fat or non-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt (avoid or limit if you have lactose intolerance)	- Dried peas and beans (lentils, kidney beans, white beans) - Nuts and seeds - Chunky peanut butters - Meats that are spicy, fried, fatty, or have gristle
Grain foods	- Items made with refined white flour (breads, muffins, rolls, and pasta) - Converted or instant rice - Refined cereals (farina, Cream of Wheat, Cream of Rice, and Corn Flakes) - Oatmeal - Pancakes and waffles - Cornbread - Pretzels - Graham crackers - Saltines	- Whole-grain breads (multigrain bread with nuts and seeds) - Whole-grain pasta - Brown rice and other cooked whole grains - Whole-grain cereals - Bran - High-fiber instant cereals - Granola - Popcorn - Baked goods and snack foods made with whole grains, dried fruit, nuts, seeds, and other high-fiber ingredients
Fruits	- Canned or cooked fruit - Bananas - Applesauce	- Fresh, unpeeled fruit - Dried fruit
Vegetables	- Cooked asparagus tips, beets, carrots, peeled zucchini, mushrooms, celery, green beans, acorn squash - Baked potato without skin - Tomato paste, tomato purée, tomato sauce	- All other cooked vegetables - Raw vegetables
Other foods	- Mild clear liquids - Broths and soups - Sports drinks - Jell-O	- Foods made with sugar alcohols (sorbitol, xylitol, or mannitol) - Carbonated drinks - Foods and drinks with caffeine - Alcohol - Spicy, fried, greasy, and very sweet foods