Diarrhea

What is diarrhea?
Do you have bowel movements more often than normal? Are they soft, loose or watery? Then you may have diarrhea.

Call your doctor or nurse if:
- You feel dizzy
- You have a fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher
- You have diarrhea and cramps for more than a day
- Your rectal area is sore or bleeds

Do these things to feel better:

Eat small meals that are easy to digest.
- Eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 big meals.

Choose foods from the list on the other side of this sheet.

Drink more liquids each day.
- Keep in mind that drinking more won’t stop the diarrhea, but it will help replace fluids you are losing.
- Most people who have diarrhea need to drink 8 to 12 cups of liquid every day.
- Clear broth, gelatin, and Pedialyte® are good choices for most people.

Stay away from these foods:
Some foods can make diarrhea worse.
- Don’t have dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and sour cream. You may want to try “lactose-free” products instead.
- Don’t eat spicy, greasy, or fried foods.
- Don’t have foods that cause gas, such as broccoli and cabbage.
- Don’t eat foods that are high in fiber, such as whole-wheat breads, granola, and bran cereals.
- Don’t eat raw fruits or vegetables. Most canned fruits and vegetables are okay.

Check with your doctor or nurse before taking medicine for diarrhea.

“I was afraid to go places without a bathroom close by. My nurse told me what foods to eat to feel better. She also told me about medicine that I now take when I need to.”
Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects: Diarrhea

These foods and drinks may help if you have diarrhea:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soups (clear liquids)</th>
<th>Drinks (clear liquids)</th>
<th>Meals and snacks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clear broth, such as chicken, vegetable, or beef</td>
<td>• Clear soda, such as ginger ale</td>
<td>• Applesauce</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cranberry or grape juice</td>
<td>• Bananas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedalyte®</td>
<td>• Crackers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Tea (without caffeine)</td>
<td>• Cream of wheat or rice cereal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Water</td>
<td>• Eggs</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Gelatin (Jell-O®)</td>
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<td>• Meats, such as chicken, fish, or turkey—broiled or baked, without the skin</td>
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<td>• Noodles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedalyte®</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Oatmeal</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Peanut butter that is creamy or smooth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Most canned or cooked fruits and vegetables without seeds or skins are easy on your stomach. |

Bananas, Rice (white), Applesauce, and Toast (white) are good foods to eat if your diarrhea is severe. This is called the BRAT diet.

Stay away from these drinks:
Some drinks can make diarrhea worse.
- **Don’t** have beer, wine, and other drinks with alcohol in them.
- **Don’t** have caffeine drinks like cola, coffee, and black tea.

Clean your rectal area with warm water and a baby-wipe. Keep the area dry. Ask about creams that can help.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine is okay for me to take?
3. How much liquid should I drink each day? What are oral rehydration drinks?
4. Would you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods to eat and what foods to avoid?
5. What is a sitz bath? How could these help me?

How can we help?

National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service
Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)
Web: www.cancer.gov
Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:
www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects

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