

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.”

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.

These foods and drinks may help if you have diarrhea:

Soups (clear liquids)	Drinks (clear liquids)	Meals and snacks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear broth, such as chicken, vegetable, or beef 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear soda, such as ginger ale • Cranberry or grape juice • Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedialyte® • Tea (without caffeine) • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applesauce • Bananas • Crackers • Cream of wheat or rice cereal • Eggs • Gelatin (Jell-O®) • Meats, such as chicken, fish, or turkey—broiled or baked, without the skin • Noodles • Oatmeal • Peanut butter that is creamy or smooth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoes—boiled, without the skin • White rice • White toast <p>Most canned or cooked fruits and vegetables without seeds or skins are easy on your stomach.</p> 

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?



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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

