

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canned or cooked fruit Bananas Applesauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh, unpeeled fruit Dried fruit
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooked asparagus tips, beets, carrots, peeled zucchini, mushrooms, celery, green beans, acorn squash Baked potato without skin Tomato paste, tomato purée, tomato sauce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other cooked vegetables Raw vegetables
Other foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild clear liquids Broths and soups Sports drinks Jell-O 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foods made with sugar alcohols (sorbitol, xylitol, or mannitol) Carbonated drinks Foods and drinks with caffeine Alcohol Spicy, fried, greasy, and very sweet foods