

Managing Diarrhea

Diarrhea is having three or more watery bowel movements (poops) per day. It is a common side effect of radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Diarrhea can lead to dehydration and weight loss.

To manage diarrhea, it may be helpful to make temporary changes to your diet, such as:

- Drinking at least 1.5 to 2 litres (6 to 8 cups) of fluid each day.
 - Try to drink water, juice, milk, soups or broths, decaffeinated tea and nutrition supplement drinks such as Ensure® or Boost®.
 - Ask your cancer care team if you should drink electrolyte replacement beverages.
- Eating small frequent meals and snacks. Try to eat every 2 - 3 hours.
- Avoiding spicy and greasy foods, caffeine (coffee, tea, energy drinks) and sugary drinks (regular pop, iced tea, fruit drinks, regular sports drinks, etc.).
- Peeling and removing the seeds from vegetables and fruit.
- Eating more foods with soluble fibre such as peeled apples or applesauce, bananas, oatmeal, barley, oat bran, avocado, smooth peanut butter and peeled potatoes or sweet potatoes.
- Eating fewer foods with insoluble fibre such as wheat bran, whole grain products, legumes, leafy green vegetables, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, nuts and seeds, dried fruit and popcorn.
- Asking your cancer care team if a soluble fibre supplement (such as psyllium) is right for you.
- You may tolerate lactose free dairy products better. You can also try plant based dairy alternatives or lactase enzyme tablets (follow instructions on the package).
- Talking with your nurse or doctor to see if you should use an anti-diarrhea medication.
- After diarrhea has improved, you can slowly return to your usual way of eating and drinking.

Ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian at the cancer centre if you are eating less than usual and experiencing unplanned weight loss.