

Side Effects - Diarrhea

Diarrhea means having bowel movements that are soft, loose or watery more than three times per day. If diarrhea is severe or lasts a long time, the body does not absorb enough water and nutrients. This can cause you to become dehydrated or malnourished. Cancer treatments or the cancer itself, may cause diarrhea or make it worse. Some medicines, infections and stress can also cause diarrhea.

Diarrhea that leads to dehydration and low levels of salt and potassium can be life threatening. Call your health care team if you have diarrhea, feel dizzy or light headed, have dark yellow urine or are not urinating or have a fever of 100.4° F or higher.

Ways to manage

You may be advised to take steps to prevent complications from diarrhea:

- **Check before taking medicine.** Check with your nurse before taking medicine for diarrhea.
- **Keep your anal area clean and dry.** Try using warm water and wipes to stay clean. It may help to take warm, shallow baths. These are called sitz baths.

When you have diarrhea:

Eat or drink	Avoid eating or drinking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink 8-12 cups or more of fluid per day• Low fiber foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very hot or cold beverages• Milk (may use soy, rice or almond milk)*• Alcoholic drinks• Caffeinated drinks (tea, soda and coffee)• Carbonated drinks• Prune, orange and grapefruit juices• Spicy, greasy or fried foods• High-fiber foods (whole grain products, beans, fresh fruits and vegetables with skins, seeds, popcorn, pickles)• Dietary supplements such as Ensure*• Dairy products*

* Dietary supplements and dairy only need to be avoided if they make diarrhea worse (most people can tolerate without any issue).

Talk with your health care team

- What is causing the diarrhea?
- What symptoms should I call you about?
- How much liquid should I drink each day?
- Can I speak to a registered dietitian to learn more about foods and drinks that are best?
- What medicine or other steps can I take to prevent diarrhea and to decrease rectal pain?
