

## Diarrhea

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/diarrhea>

### Concerns or need help with Diarrhea?

Diarrhea is frequent, loose, or watery bowel movements (poop). This includes loose stools that are hard to hold in (incontinence) or just the need to have a bowel movement more often than usual.

It is best to treat diarrhea as it develops. Diarrhea may be caused by cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation to the abdomen. With any new side effect, let your cancer care team know what you are experiencing. When experiencing diarrhea, especially tell your doctor if severe or in large, frequent amounts.

Mild diarrhea usually does not result in serious problems, however, can be uncomfortable. More significant diarrhea can cause dehydration and imbalance of electrolytes as a result the water lost. Severe dehydration can lead to kidney failure. Stay hydrated by drinking water or sports drinks often.

### Prevention and Treatment of Diarrhea

The best prevention and treatment will depend on your symptoms and the cause of your diarrhea. Ask your doctor if you need medicines to prevent diarrhea such as loperamide (Imodium) or the prescription diphenoxylate/atropine (Lomotil). It is always best to consult with your doctor given your unique medical situation.

### Consider these options to help you manage mild diarrhea:

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, dairy, fat, fiber, orange juice, prune juice, and spicy foods.
- Avoid medicines such as laxatives, stool softeners, and metoclopramide (Reglan). Metoclopramide is used to prevent nausea and vomiting from chemotherapy but can lead to looser stools at times.
- Eat small, frequent meals and choose foods that are very easy to digest such as bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast. Your doctor may recommend a low-residue diet, which includes low-fiber foods
- Drink water and other clear liquids to prevent dehydration. People with severe dehydration may need to receive intravenous (IV) fluids. This means that a health care provider gives fluid to the body through a vein.
- If diarrhea is caused by the pancreas not working well, replacing pancreatic enzymes may help. This occurs in some patients with pancreatic cancer.
- If diarrhea is caused by an infection as determined by your doctor, this can be treated effectively with an antibiotic prescribed by your doctor.
- For severe diarrhea from chemotherapy, ask your doctor about changing the schedule or dose of chemotherapy.

Content adapted from websites below.

### Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, Diarrhea](#)
- [NIH, Diarrhea: Cancer Treatment Side Effect](#)
- [NIH, Gastrointestinal Complications \(PDQ®\)](#)
- [Chemocare, Diarrhea and Chemotherapy](#)
- [American Cancer Society Diarrhea Information](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Coping With Diarrhea](#)

### Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Diarrea](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Diarrea](#)
- [Chemocare, Diarrea y quimioterapia](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Diarrhea](#)