

Food Tips to Help You Control your Diarrhea

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is when you have frequent or unusually loose or liquid bowel movements. You might also have cramps in your abdomen or have to rush to the toilet. Diarrhea can be caused by radiation therapy to your pelvis, or by certain chemotherapy drugs.

Helpful hints

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks.
- Drink 8-10 large glasses of liquid a day to replace fluids, it is best to drink these between your meals.
- Try to drink slowly and have your beverages warm or at room temperature. Try not to have your drinks very hot or cold.
- Remove all skins, peels and seeds from fruits and vegetables on the recommended food list.
- Diarrhea can cause a loss of sodium and potassium from your body. Try to replace these minerals by eating things like bananas, melons, peach or apricot nectar, peeled potatoes, tomato juice or vegetable juice.
- Try to chew with your mouth closed. Try not to talk while you are chewing. Avoid chewing gum. These all may cause you to swallow more air that can add to your gassiness or cramps.
- Keep your activity to a minimum right after you have eaten.
- Avoid fatty, greasy or fried foods.
- Avoid highly spiced foods.

Recommended Foods

It is sometimes difficult to know what to eat when you have diarrhea. The following list is a general guide of foods that will not make your diarrhea worse.

- Low fibre cereals such as Cheerios®, Cornflakes®, Special K®, Rice Krispies®, cream of wheat or oatmeal
- White rice
- Pasta
- White bread, buns or bagels
- Melba toast, soda crackers
- Plain cakes or cookies such as arrowroot or social tea
- Chicken, beef or vegetable broth or consommé
- Eggs, lean meat, skinless poultry, fish (not deep fried), tofu



More recommended Foods

- Smooth peanut butter
- Pulp free juices
- Applesauce, peeled baked apples, bananas, canned fruit, melons and cantaloupes
- Low-fibre cooked vegetables such as carrots, squash, green or yellow beans, mushrooms, asparagus tips
- Milk products such as cheese, cottage cheese and yogurt- try these in small amounts to see if you can tolerate them
- Iceberg lettuce

Foods to avoid when you have diarrhea

When you have diarrhea there are some foods that will increase the number of bowel movements you are having and it is best to avoid them until your bowels are back to normal. The following list tells you which foods to avoid.

- Prune juice
- Berries, rhubarb and grapes
- Nuts, seeds and coconut
- Corn, peas
- Cabbage, broccoli, and brussel sprouts
- Beans (including chili), lentils, dried peas (including pea soup)
- Highly spiced, high fat, processed meats such as pepperoni, salami, sausages and side bacon
- Popcorn, taco chips, pickles and olives
- Carbonated drinks such as pop
- Alcoholic drinks such as beer and hard liquor
- Drinks that have caffeine in them such as coffee, tea, colas, hot chocolate and cocoa

If your diarrhea is getting worse:

Please tell your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist. Your doctor may prescribe medication to help control your diarrhea and it is important to use this as recommended. Your doctor **may** advise you to let your bowel "rest". This means that you must only have clear fluids for 12 – 24 hours. You should drink 8 – 10 cups of things like, fruit juices without pulp, Gatorade®, Tang®, Quench® or Kool-Aid®. You can also have clear broths, consommés or bouillons, Jell-O or popsicles.

Once you have rested your bowel, you can slowly return to solid foods that are found on the recommended food list. **These are generalized guidelines only – for further help with your diet please ask to see a Dietitian.**

