



Northeast Cancer Centre
Health Sciences North
a Cancer Care Ontario partner

Centre de cancérologie du Nord-Est
Horizon Santé-Nord
un partenaire d'Action Cancer Ontario

Client's Name: _____ Date: _____

Registered Dietitian's Name: _____

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Diarrhea

Diarrhea can occur as a result of chemotherapy, radiation to the abdomen or pelvis, presence of tumour in the bowel, an infection, food intolerance or medications such as antibiotics.

Diarrhea is defined as the passage of more than 3 loose/watery stools in 24 hours. If left untreated, diarrhea can cause loss of fluids, sodium, potassium, and other important vitamin and minerals and can decrease your ability to fight infection.

Some diet changes may help you better manage the side effect of diarrhea.

Types of fibre found in food:

1. **Insoluble fibre:** part of a plant that cannot be broken down in your body. Common food sources include legumes, seeds, fruit/vegetable skins, whole grains and wheat bran. This fibre attracts water in your bowels to soften your stool making it easier to move through the intestines. When experiencing diarrhea, foods high in insoluble fibre can worsen symptoms and should be avoided.
2. **Soluble Fibre:** softer part of the plant that mixes with water to make a soft gel. It helps slow down food as it passes through the intestines and give your body more time to absorb water and nutrients which can improve diarrhea by making your stools more solid. Good sources include; cooked potato or carrots, white rice, tapioca, apple sauce, bananas, oatmeal, Cherrios ®.



Helpful Hints:

Food

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks every 2 hours instead of 3 large meals
- Try to replace sodium and potassium losses with the following foods: bananas, melons, peach and apricot nectar, peeled potatoes, broths, meat and fish.
- Remove all skins, peels, membranes and seeds from fruits and vegetables.

Fluids

- Drink 8-10 cups of liquid a day to replace fluids lost, preferably between meals. Sports drinks (eg. Gatorade®) are a good choice as they help with replacing sodium and potassium.
- Drink your liquids slowly, either warm or at room temperature. Hot or cold beverages may make diarrhea worse.
- Avoid carbonated and alcoholic beverages (e.g., soft drinks, beer, hard liquor) and caffeine containing beverages (e.g., coffee, tea, colas, hot chocolate)
- If you find that your diarrhea is worse after eating milk products, try lower fat milk products and only have milk products with meals. If diarrhea still doesn't improve try lactose free milk or milk substitutes such as soy milk.

Environment

- Eat slowly and try to chew your food with your mouth closed. Talking while you chew or chewing gum may cause you to swallow too much air, which can cause gas or cramps.
- Avoid physical activity for at least an hour after eating.
- After eating, sit up straight with your legs up for at least 30 minutes

General Guidelines for Diarrhea Management

<i>Food Category</i>	<i>Suggested Foods</i>	<i>Foods to avoid</i>
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peel all fruits and vegetables - Well cooked vegetables, such as: potatoes (without skins), carrots, turnips, beets, butternut squash, cauliflower, broccoli (no stalks), young green or yellow beans (strings removed), and mushrooms. - Applesauce, baked apples (peeled) - Bananas, peaches, honeydew melon, cantaloupe, watermelon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raw fruit and vegetables with skins, seeds and membranes (e.g., berries, rhubarb, grapes, plums, pineapple, kiwi, tomato) - Dried fruit (e.g., prunes, dates, raisins, figs) - Spinach, cabbage, corn, peas, sauerkraut, lettuce, celery, asparagus, brussel sprouts - Prune juice, tomato, V-8®, pulp containing juices
Grain Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All breads and bread products made with refined white flour. - Refined cooked cereals including instant oatmeal, (no dried fruits) cream of wheat, refined cold cereals such as: Corn Flakes®, Cheerios®, Rice Krispies®, Special K® - White rice, white pasta - Melba toast, soda crackers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole grain or whole wheat bread and cereal products - Bran products - Wild rice, brown rice - Barley - Whole wheat pasta
Milk and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Milk products, as tolerated (e.g., yogurt containing “Bifidus” a lactic culture which helps balance your digestive system, may be helpful) 	Any milk products containing seeds, nuts, dried fruit and/or peels (eg. yogurt)
Meat and Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eggs, lean meat, poultry (without skin), and fish (not fried) - Chicken and beef broth, consommé - smooth peanut butter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pepperoni, salami, sausages, side bacon - deep fried meats - nuts, seeds, coconut, dried beans (e.g. baked beans), lentils, legumes (e.g. chili, pea soup) - chunky peanut butter
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tapioca pudding, rice pudding, Jell-O®, popsicles - Plain cakes, cookies (Arrowroot®, Social Tea®, oatmeal cookies) - Jelly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pickles, olives, popcorn, jam, marmalade - Deep fried foods - Spicy foods - Caffeinated beverages - Large quantities of chocolate, candies, sugar alcohol sweetened foods/drinks and gum (i.e. those containing sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol)

In order to allow your bowel to rest, it may be necessary to:

1. Only consume *clear fluids* for 12-24 hours

- Aim for 8-10 cups (2000-2500 mL) of clear fluids daily such as:
 - Fruits juices without pulp (mix fruit juices with water if they are sweetened)
 - Sports drinks (Gatorade®, Powerade®)
 - Bouillons, consommés, clear broths
 - Jell-O®, Popsicles



2. Gradually progress to full fluids such as:

- Refined cooked cereals (cream of wheat, oatmeal, infant cereals)
- Fruit & vegetable juices (no pulp)
- Pureed soups & cream soups
- Pudding, yogurt, custard, ice milk, ice cream, sherbet (without chocolate, coconut, nuts, skins, and seedy fruits)
- Nutrition supplements (Ensure Plus®, Boost Plus®, Carnation Breakfast Anytime®)
- Milk

3. As your diarrhea resolves, gradually return to your usual solid diet as tolerated.

If your diarrhea is very severe (watery and/or loose and more than 7 times in the day or night) and lasts more than 24 hours:

- **Contact your doctor, nurse or dietitian for further advice.**