

Information for patients and families



Walker Family Cancer Centre

Diarrhea

What you need to know and why:

Diarrhea refers to bowel movements that are frequent or liquid. You may experience diarrhea with your disease or cancer treatment. Even a change in daily routine or stress may cause a change in your bowel function.

Call the Oncology Clinic - Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: **905-682-6451** if:

- No improvement or symptoms increase after following management tips below
- Abdominal cramps
- Sore skin in anal area from frequent movements

Call the Oncology Clinic - Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: **905-682-6451** OR
After hours and holidays call: 905-685-8082 if:

- You cannot keep fluids down
- You have blood in stool
- Your temperature is 38°C or 100°F or higher

What to do:

Management of diarrhea

Medication:

- STOP TAKING LAXATIVES
- Take antidiarrheal medication such as Imodium as ordered by your oncologist

Lifestyle:

- Keep the anal area clean and dry
- Cigarette smoking should also be avoided.

Fluids:

In addition to the recommended 8 to 10 cups of fluid you should drink every day, when you have diarrhea it is important to drink more to replace lost fluids.

- Drink an extra cup of fluid for every diarrhea bowel movement
- Sip fluids slowly throughout the day
- Drink fluids at room temperature (hot or cold may increase diarrhea)
- Avoid sugary beverages such as juice and regular pop
- Avoid fluids with caffeine such as dark colas
- Good choices to help replace lost salts are: plain broth or bouillon, Pedialyte, Propel Water, Gatorade or Powerade diluted with equal parts water, "G2" Gatorade, or your own rehydration Solution (see next page for recipe)
- Diluted juices, water, decaffeinated coffee and tea can also meet your fluid needs.

Recipes for oral rehydration solutions:

Recipe 1

- ½ teaspoon salt
- 6 level teaspoons of sugar
- 1 litre of water

Mix well

Recipe 2

- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 8 teaspoons of sugar
- 4 oz of orange juice
- 1 litre of water

Mix well

Diet:

The following is meant as a guideline. You can also judge if you can or cannot tolerate a certain food. If you continue to have ongoing diarrhea, a dietitian may be able to help.

- Try a low fiber BRAT diet [Bananas, white Rice, Apple sauce, Toast (white bread)]
- Eat small, frequent meals
- Avoid the following foods:
 - High fibre foods such as peas, beans, seeds, whole grain bread, high fibre cereals
 - High fat foods – fried foods, bacon, potato chips, rich desserts (pies, cakes, cookies), excessive amounts of butter, oil and cream
 - Raw fruits and vegetables
 - Sorbitol – a type of sugar found in sugar free gum, candy and reduced sugar jam
 - Spicy foods
 - Lactose – limit milk intake or try lactose free milk.
- Choose the following foods:
 - White bread, pasta, rice, pretzels, oatmeal*, oat bran *, Rice Krispies, plain cheerios, barley*, white crackers
 - Tender chicken, fish, beef, pork, eggs, smooth nut butter
 - Cooked potatoes*, applesauce*, canned peaches and pears*, melons, bananas*
 - Cultured dairy products such as hard cheese, yogurt and buttermilk may be tolerated

*These foods contain soluble fibre and can be effective in reducing diarrhea as they retain water in the stool.

- When diarrhea has resolved, you can start adding the “avoid” foods back into your diet.
- Reintroduce foods with caution to avoid problems
- Let your body be your guide and avoid the foods that cause the diarrhea to return

Personal Notes/Reminders:
