

# Diarrhea

Diarrhea is frequent soft, loose, or watery stools. For people with cancer, diarrhea can be caused by certain types of cancer, cancer treatments, infection, and medications. Uncontrolled diarrhea can lead to poor appetite, weight loss, dehydration, and weakness.

## Tips for Managing Diarrhea

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- Drink a lot of mild, clear liquids during the day. Room-temperature liquids may be better tolerated.
- To replace fluids lost with diarrhea, drink at least 1 cup of liquid after each loose bowel movement.
- Eat several small meals throughout the day.
- Lie down for 30 minutes after a meal to help slow digestion.
- Eat and drink foods that provide potassium and sodium, such as broths, soups, fruit juices, sport drinks, crackers, pretzels, and ripe bananas.
- Eat foods with pectin (like applesauce or ripe bananas) to help firm stools.
- Prolonged diarrhea lasting more than 2 days may cause a temporary lactose intolerance. If this happens, limit milk and dairy foods to no more than 2 cups per day. You can start eating dairy products again after the diarrhea has subsided.
- Avoid foods, chewing gum, and candies made with sorbitol, xylitol, or mannitol. These types of sugars may cause diarrhea, gas, and bloating.
- Avoid greasy, fried, spicy, and sweet foods.
- Limit high-fiber foods like raw fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds as they are harder to digest. Once you are feeling better, slowly add foods with fiber back into your diet.



### WORD OF CAUTION

Call your doctor if:

- You have more than 6 watery stools in a 24-hour period.
- You are feeling weak or dizzy.
- Your stools have a strange smell or color.

## Medication and Supplements

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- Before taking any over-the-counter medication for diarrhea, discuss it with a member of your health care team.
- Discuss any supplements you may be taking with a member of your health care team.
- Ask a member of your health care team if it is appropriate to:
  - Take a vitamin or mineral supplement
  - Eat foods that have probiotics or take a probiotic supplement
  - Use a bulking agent with psyllium fiber or banana flakes

