

# Diarrhea



“I was afraid to go places without a bathroom close by. My nurse told me what foods to eat to feel better. She also told me about medicine that I now take when I need to.”

## What is diarrhea?

Do you have bowel movements more often than normal? Are they soft, loose or watery? Then you may have diarrhea.

## Call your doctor or nurse if:

- You feel dizzy
- You have a fever of 100.5° F (38° C) or higher
- You have diarrhea and cramps for more than a day
- Your rectal area is sore or bleeds

## Do these things to feel better:

### Eat small meals that are easy to digest.

- Eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 big meals.

**Choose foods from the list on the other side of this sheet.**

### Drink more liquids each day.

- Keep in mind that drinking more won't stop the diarrhea, but it will help replace fluids you are losing.
- Most people who have diarrhea need to drink 8 to 12 cups of liquid every day.
- Clear broth, gelatin, and Pedialyte® are good choices for most people.




### Stay away from these foods:

Some foods can make diarrhea worse.

- **Don't** have dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and sour cream. You may want to try “lactose-free” products instead.
- **Don't** eat spicy, greasy, or fried foods.
- **Don't** have foods that cause gas, such as broccoli and cabbage.
- **Don't** eat foods that are high in fiber, such as whole-wheat breads, granola, and bran cereals.
- **Don't** eat raw fruits or vegetables. Most canned fruits and vegetables are okay.

**Check with your doctor or nurse before taking medicine for diarrhea.**

## These foods and drinks may help if you have diarrhea:

Soups (clear liquids)	Drinks (clear liquids)	Meals and snacks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear broth, such as chicken, vegetable, or beef</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear soda, such as ginger ale</li> <li>• Cranberry or grape juice</li> <li>• Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedialyte®</li> <li>• Tea (without caffeine)</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applesauce</li> <li>• Bananas</li> <li>• Crackers</li> <li>• Cream of wheat or rice cereal</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Gelatin (Jell-O®)</li> <li>• Meats, such as chicken, fish, or turkey—broiled or baked, without the skin</li> <li>• Noodles</li> <li>• Oatmeal</li> <li>• Peanut butter that is creamy or smooth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potatoes—boiled, without the skin</li> <li>• White rice</li> <li>• White toast</li> </ul> <p><b>Most canned or cooked fruits and vegetables without seeds or skins are easy on your stomach.</b></p> 

**Bananas, Rice (white), Applesauce, and Toast (white) are good foods to eat if your diarrhea is severe. This is called the BRAT diet.**

### Stay away from these drinks:

Some drinks can make diarrhea worse.

- **Don't** have beer, wine, and other drinks with alcohol in them.
- **Don't** have caffeine drinks like cola, coffee, and black tea.

**Clean your rectal area with warm water and a baby-wipe. Keep the area dry. Ask about creams that can help.**

### Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine is okay for me to take?
3. How much liquid should I drink each day? What are oral rehydration drinks?
4. Would you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods to eat and what foods to avoid?
5. What is a sitz bath? How could these help me?



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### How can we help?

#### National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

Online Chat: [www.cancer.gov/livehelp](http://www.cancer.gov/livehelp)

**NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:**

[www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects](http://www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects)

