

Eating Hints for People with Diarrhea



PMH

The eating suggestions in this pamphlet can help improve diarrhea, cramping and/or gas that may occur from abdominal/pelvic radiation therapy, some chemotherapy drugs, or other conditions. Your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist may also recommend medications such as Imodium or Lomotil to help control your diarrhea.

Do I need to follow a special diet?

If you have diarrhea, eating well may seem difficult. Try to eat 5 or 6 smaller meals instead of 3 larger meals each day. By choosing the foods and beverages suggested in this pamphlet, you will be able to help manage the diarrhea and eat a balanced diet. This is important because your body needs many nutrients for maintaining weight, healing and repairing body tissues, and keeping your immune system strong.

Should I change my diet before diarrhea starts?

No. If diarrhea occurs, it is because of your cancer treatment, not what you eat or do not eat. But, these eating suggestions can help you to control diarrhea. If you start to have abdominal cramps or your bowel movements become more frequent and softer than usual, it is a good time to start making some changes to your diet. Diet changes made sooner than this, could cause you to become constipated. Diarrhea from abdominal or pelvic radiation therapy may start as early as 2 weeks into treatment. It may continue for a couple of weeks after treatment has finished. Diarrhea from certain chemotherapy agents may occur during or just after each course of treatment is completed. It may last for a few days. If you have chemotherapy while you are on radiation therapy, diarrhea may be more severe.

When can I go back to my usual diet?

Once the diarrhea has settled down after treatment is completed, and you have reduced your use of medications for diarrhea control, you should slowly add foods back into your diet that you have been avoiding.

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Author: Oncology Dietitians of UHN
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University Health Network
Toronto General Hospital Toronto Western Hospital Princess Margaret Hospital



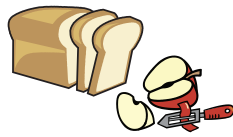
What diet changes do I need to make now that I have diarrhea?

A low fibre diet can help you manage diarrhea, cramps and gas. A diet low in fat, lactose, caffeine and/or spices may also help. The diet most helpful to you depends on what you usually eat and how your body reacts to certain foods and beverages.

Fibre

To reduce the fibre in your diet:

1. Choose breads, cereals, crackers and other grain products made with white flour
2. Avoid nuts, seeds, dried beans and peas
3. Eat fewer fruits and vegetables in one day and choose more juices instead
4. Eat smaller portions of all fruits and vegetables at one time, for example 1/2 piece instead of 1 whole piece
5. Avoid dried fruits such as prunes, including prune juice, raisins and apricots, as well as seedy fruits such as berries and kiwi fruit



Fat

To reduce the fat in your diet:

1. Choose lean meats, poultry, fish and vegetables that have been baked, broiled, steamed or stir-fried instead of those that are deep-fried or served in creamy sauces
2. Use butter, margarine, cream cheese or peanut butter in small amounts, for example 1–2 teaspoons per meal
3. Use low-fat milk, yogurt or cottage cheese (2% M.F. or less) and lower fat hard cheeses (20% M.F. or less)



Spices

Most herbs and spices can be used to add flavour to foods as you desire, but, beware of spicy foods made with curry, chili or hot pepper sauce. These spices may irritate your bowels and cause diarrhea.



Milk Products - Lactose is the natural sugar found in milk products.

To reduce the lactose in your diet:

1. Try low lactose products such as Lactaid® or Lacteeze® milk available in grocery stores, aged cheeses or yogurt. Lactaid® tablets or drops are also available in drug stores
2. Eat or drink smaller amounts of milk products at one time (1/2 cup milk instead of 1 cup, or 1/3 cup sherbet instead of 1/2 cup)



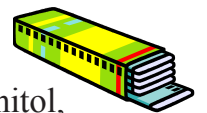
Caffeine

To reduce the caffeine in your diet, drink less regular coffee, tea, colas or chocolate beverages than you usually do. Instead try decaffeinated coffee, tea and colas, hot water with lemon or honey, herbal tea like Chamomile or Apple Cinnamon



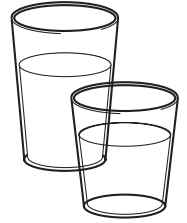
Sugar Alcohols

Sugar alcohols such as xylitol, mannitol, sorbitol and isomalt are used as sweeteners and can be found in sugar-free products including chewing gums, candies, cough drops, cookies, bars and beverages. Try to limit products with these ingredients as they may contribute to gas and diarrhea. If your medication contains any of these sugar alcohols, do not stop taking it. Speak with your doctor about a different choice.



Fluids

It is important to replace fluids lost from diarrhea to prevent dehydration. Drinking at least 8–10 cups (2 to 2.5 litres) of liquid a day should be enough for most people. To do this, try to drink small amounts, such as 1/2 cup, often throughout the day.



Clear fluids - your best fluid choices!

- Water
- Juices (except prune)
- Fruit drinks such as Tang ®, Gatorade ®
- Caffeine-free soft drinks such as Gingerale, Sprite ®
- Weak tea or caffeine-free tea/coffee
- Clear soups: beef, chicken or vegetable broth
- Jello ®
- Popsicles

If diarrhea is severe dilute juices or fruit drinks with equal parts water

Fluids to use with caution:

Watch out for the following fluids—they may increase diarrhea.

- Caffeine-containing beverages: coffee, strong tea, or colas
- Milk products such as milk, pudding, ice cream, cream soups, Carnation Breakfast Anytime ®
- Nutritional supplements such as Ensure ® or Boost ®. Although these drinks are milk-free, they are rich and should be taken in small amounts only (1/3 to 1/2 cup at one time), or diluted with water (1/4 cup water plus 1/4 cup Ensure ®), so diarrhea does not become worse.

Drinking fluids at room temperature may help reduce diarrhea or cramping. Avoid liquids that are very hot or very cold to see if this works for you!

If Diarrhea is Severe (bowel movements are very loose or watery and you need to run to the bathroom often during the day and/or night)

1. Call your doctor or nurse
2. Drink only clear fluids for 12–24 hours
3. As the diarrhea settles down, add solid foods to your diet over a few days, by following these steps:

Step 1: add low fibre, low fat, starchy foods such as soda crackers, arrowroot biscuits, white toast, English muffins, plain bagel, breadsticks, steamed rice, white potato (no skin), noodles in broth

Step 2: add low lactose fluids or soft foods such as Lactaid ®/Lacteeze ® milk, yogurt, baked custard, lactose free puddings

Step 3: add lean meats, poultry or fish cooked without added fats

Step 4: add low fibre fruits and vegetables, like canned mandarin oranges and cooked green beans

Canada's Food Guide for People with Diarrhea

Grains

Suggested:

Cornflakes ®, Crispix ®, Rice Krispies ®, Special K ®, Cream of wheat, oatmeal, white bread, plain bagel, French stick, English muffin, hamburger bun, white pasta, white rice, saltines, melba toast, bread sticks, rice crackers, Ritz ®, pretzels, Angel Food or sponge cake, arrowroots, social teas, digestives, oatmeal cookies, vanilla wafers

Milk Products

Suggested:

Lactose Free Milk: Lactaid ®, Lacteeze ® or soy beverage

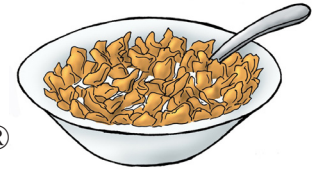
Yogurt: 2% M.F. or less; plain, vanilla, cappuccino or peach

Cheese: hard cheeses (20% M.F. or less)

Desserts: sherbet, pudding or custards that are baked or made with lactose reduced milk

Avoid:

All Bran ®, Bran Flakes ®, Shredded Wheat ®, Oatbran, Mueslix ®, Cheerios ®, Cornbran, Granola, Red River ®, whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel or cracked wheat breads, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, wild rice, barley, whole grain crackers like Ryvita ®, corn chips, nacho chips, crackers with nuts or seeds, baked goods with dried fruit or nuts, like carrot cake or fig bars



Avoid or Use with Caution:

Milk: regular white or chocolate milk

Yogurt: flavours with seeds, like raspberry or strawberry or those made with higher than 2% M.F.

Cheese: higher fat varieties like Camembert and those with seeds like caraway

Desserts: ice cream, regular puddings and custards



Vegetables

Cooked vegetables may be easier to digest than raw. Limit each serving size to 1/2 piece or 1/3 to 1/2 cup.

Suggested:

alfalfa sprouts, asparagus tips, carrots, celery, green or yellow beans, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, green or red peppers, peeled white potatoes, pumpkin, tomato sauce, peeled and seeded tomato, cucumber, eggplant or zucchini



Avoid:

artichokes, beets, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage*, cauliflower, corn, kohlrabi, okra, onions*, parsnip, peas, spinach, sweet potato, turnip, winter squash

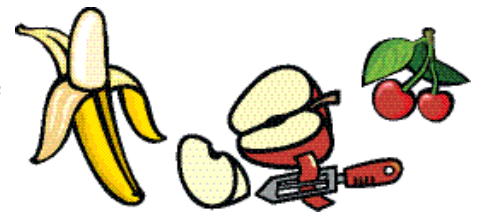
***low in fibre but may cause gas**

Fruits

Peeled fruits may be easier to digest. Limit each serving size to 1/2 piece or 1/3 to 1/2 cup.

Suggested:

apple, apple sauce, apricots, banana, cherries, peaches, nectarine, pineapple, grapes (10–12), mango, plum, honeydew, cantaloupe, watermelon, orange or grapefruit segments without the membranes



Avoid:

all berries, coconut, fruit cocktail, kiwi, pear, papaya, persimmon, pomegranate, rhubarb, dried fruit like raisins, apricots, dates or figs

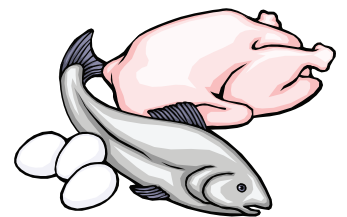
Meat & Alternatives

Suggested:

all lean beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey, fish, seafood and eggs prepared with a low fat cooking method, like baked or broiled; smooth peanut butter in small amounts

Avoid:

canned fish packed in oil, nuts, seeds, chunky peanut butter, dried beans and peas like kidney beans, lentils and chick peas



Sample Meal Plan:

Breakfast: Rice Krispies with 1/2 sliced banana and Lactaid ® milk
decaffeinated coffee

Snack: plain oatmeal muffin
diluted fruit juice

Lunch: chicken noodle soup
1/2 sliced turkey sandwich on white bread
small peeled apple
Lactaid ® milk

Snack: plain cookies
decaffeinated tea

Supper: lean roast beef with small amount gravy
mashed potato
cooked baby carrots
water

Snack: * lactose free pudding
diluted juice

* To make lactose free pudding...Add Lactaid ® or Lacteeze ® milk to an instant pudding mix that does not contain milk, milk solids, skim milk powder or whey in the list of ingredients.

This document is a general overview. For more specific information about your care, please ask a member of your health care team for a referral to a registered dietitian.