



Getting Help for Diarrhea

Diarrhea is having bowel movements or passing stool more often than is normal for you. The stool may be loose or watery. It can happen with or without cramps or belly pain. You may need to get to the bathroom right away. Diarrhea happens when water in the intestine is not being absorbed back into the body. Uncontrolled diarrhea can lead to weight loss, fluid loss, poor appetite, and weakness.

Diarrhea can be caused by:

- Chemo
- Radiation therapy to the belly
- Infection
- Medicines
- Tumor growth
- Surgery
- Stress
- An overflow of intestinal liquids around stool that's stuck in the intestine (this is called an impaction)

Talk to your doctor if:

- You have diarrhea or stomach pain for more than a day.
- You are dizzy or feel like you may pass out.

- The diarrhea doesn't get better or gets worse.
- Your stools have an unusual odor or color.
- You have blood in or around your rectum or in your stool.
- You lose 5 or more pounds after the diarrhea starts.
- You don't pass urine (pee) for 12 or more hours.
- You can't drink liquids for 2 or more days.
- Your belly gets puffy or swollen.
- You have a fever of 100.5° F or higher, taken by mouth.
- You've been constipated and then start to have small amounts of diarrhea or oozing of liquid stool. (This may mean you have an impaction or severe constipation.)

What you can do if you have diarrhea:

Eat these things if you have diarrhea:

- Salty foods, such as broths, soups, sports drinks, crackers, and pretzels
- High-potassium foods, such as fruit juices and nectars, sports drinks, potatoes with the skin, and bananas
- Soluble-fiber foods, such as applesauce, bananas, canned peaches and pears, oatmeal, cooked carrots, and white rice
- Low-fiber foods, like rice, noodles, skinned turkey and chicken, white toast, mashed potatoes, and well-cooked eggs
- Limit milk or milk products to 2 cups a day. Yogurt and buttermilk are OK.

Do not eat these things if you have diarrhea:

- Foods that are very hot or spicy
- High-fiber foods, like nuts, seeds, whole grains, beans and peas, dried fruits, and raw fruits and vegetables
- High-fat foods, such as fried and greasy foods
- Alcohol or drinks with caffeine
- Acidic drinks, such as tomato juice, citrus juices, and fizzy soft drinks
- Sugar-free chewing gum and candies made with sugar alcohol (i.e., sorbitol, mannitol, or xylitol)

What you can do to feel better:

- Sip fluids all day to prevent dehydration. Try Popsicles, gelatin, and ice chips.
- Eat small meals and snacks often during the day.
- Try to drink at least 1 cup of liquid after each loose bowel movement.
- Clean your bottom with a mild soap after each bowel movement, rinse well with warm water, and pat dry. Or, use unscented baby wipes to clean yourself after each bowel movement.
- Apply a water-repellent ointment, such as A&D Ointment or petroleum jelly, to your bottom.
- Sit in a tub of warm water or a sitz bath to help reduce discomfort.

Other tips:

- Keep a record of your bowel movements to help decide when to call the doctor.
- Check with your doctor before using any over-the-counter diarrhea medicine.
- Talk to the doctor about using a prescription medicine.
- Take medicine for diarrhea as prescribed by your doctor.
- If your diarrhea gets bad (meaning that you have 7 or 8 loose stools in 24 hours), tell your doctor right away. You may need to try a clear liquid diet to give your bowels time to rest.
- Once the diarrhea has stopped, start small regular meals. Slowly start eating foods that contain fiber.

