



Diarrhea Nutrition Tips

Diarrhea has many causes. You may get it because of chemotherapy, radiation therapy to the lower abdomen, malabsorption, or use of antibiotics. It can also develop because of intolerance to milk or difficulty in absorbing fats. If you have a loss of weight with diarrhea this may be due to dehydration, which means that your body doesn't have enough water. Speak with your health professional to try to determine the cause and obtain the proper treatment. If you have diarrhea:

- Drink plenty of room-temperature liquids to help prevent dehydration. These may include fruit juices (diluted, if necessary), Gatorade, Pedialyte, ginger ale, nectars, coconut water, water, or weak teas. Limit caffeinated &/or carbonated beverages if gas or cramps occur.
- Carbonated beverages are sometimes better tolerated if you allow them to lose their fizz or stir them before you drink them.
- Consume more potassium-rich foods such as coconut water, bananas, potatoes, lactose-free milk or yogurt.
- Drink or eat some high-sodium foods, such as broth, soups, crackers, pretzels, to help replace sodium losses.
- Try the “White Diet” – bananas, rice, applesauce, white toast, skinless chicken, white fish, egg whites, soft tofu, cottage cheese, smooth yogurt
- Try Rice-Water (see recipe below)
- Choose smaller, but more frequent meals.
- Avoid greasy, spicy, highly seasoned and very sweet foods.
- Avoid raw vegetables and the skins, seeds, and stringy fibers of unpeeled fruits. Gradually resume your consumption of higher fiber foods, fruits and vegetables once the diarrhea subsides.
- Use dairy products with care due to possible lactose intolerance. Try lactose-free milk, soy milk, or yogurt, which have low or no lactose.
- Limit use of sugar-free gums and candies made with sorbitol – these can cause gas/bloating/diarrhea.

Recipe for Rice Water

Quick version: Measure and pour approximately 1-2 cups of water into a pot, add about ½ cup of rice (regular white or brown rice – NOT instant). Boil for about 10 minutes, until water becomes cloudy. Strain rice, **SAVING** the water. Rice will not be done so it should be thrown out.

Longer version, (includes fully cooked rice): Follow cooking instructions on back of rice package (NOT instant rice though). Add an additional 1 ½ cups of water or so. After the appropriate time (~20 minutes) and rice is done, drain excess water from rice into a cup.

*Let rice water cool to a safe drinking temperature or cool down completely and enjoy. A small amount of sugar or sweetener can be added if necessary. Drink about 1 cup at a time. This can be consumed 2-3 times during the day, if necessary.



Medications to Help Control Diarrhea

Goal: 3 stools or less per 24 hours

When frequent stooling or loose watery stools begin to occur, start using Imodium.

Step 1: Use 1-2 tablets of Imodium after each loose stool until you reach goal.

Do not exceed 8 tablets per day.

Start low fiber diet.

Drink at least 8 glasses of fluids a day (Gatorade, pedialyte, diluted fruit juices, broths, coconut water)

Step 2: If the above fails to control stooling, add Lomotil to regimen; alternating Imodium and Lomotil as follows....

15 minutes before breakfast – take 2 Lomotil
Mid morning (approx 10am) – take 2 Imodium
15 minutes before lunch – take 2 Lomotil
Mid-afternoon (approx 3pm) – take 2 Imodium
15 minutes before evening meal – take 2 Lomotil
Early evening (approx 7pm) – take 2 Imodium
Just before bedtime – take 2 Lomotil

These 2 drugs can be used simultaneously for synergistic effect.

Lomotil: effective in decreasing intestinal peristalsis

Imodium: effective in increasing absorption

Step 3: If step 2 is not working, call MD. You may need to use opiates, tincture of opium, etc or decrease chemo/radiation.

*Adapted from: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org); Supportive Cancer Care, Rosenbaum MD & Rosenbaum MA, 2001; *Other patients and what has worked for them.*