



Diarrhea

Diarrhea is defined as loose, watery stools that occur more often than usual. Some medications can cause diarrhea. Diet also can affect bowel function. If you develop diarrhea, take two caplets (4 mg) of Imodium® A-D (loperamide) or a generic store brand. After this first dose of two caplets, if you keep having loose stools, take only one caplet (2 mg) after each loose stool. Do not take more than eight tablets in a 24-hour period. Remember to stop taking your stool softeners and laxatives before taking Imodium® or a generic/store brand.

In addition to taking the anti-diarrhea medicine, it is important to drink a variety of fluids — eight to 10 glasses per day. Water should be only a part of the fluids you drink each day. It does not replace lost minerals. Gatorade® helps to replace salt and potassium. Clear soups or broths replace salt. Soda helps replace fluids, but can cause gas and bloating unless you let it stand to decrease the carbonation.

Eat foods that are easy to tolerate. Try the BRAT (bananas, rice, applesauce and toast) foods first. Then add bland, low-fiber foods: white-meat chicken without skin, white fish, scrambled eggs, oatmeal, cream of wheat, canned or cooked fruits without skins, crackers, white bread, pasta noodles without sauce and well-cooked and mashed vegetables.

Avoid milk and dairy products, alcohol, coffee, tea and colas that contain caffeine. Avoid foods that make diarrhea and cramping worse: fatty, fried, greasy or spicy foods; high-fiber foods; dried fruits; beans; popcorn; nuts; peas and corn; and certain sugar-free candies.

Special Instructions for patients with chemotherapy-induced diarrhea:

If you are receiving a chemotherapy agent known to cause diarrhea, such as 5 FU or Camptosar, at the first sign of diarrhea start taking Imodium® A-D (loperamide) or a generic store brand:

1. Take two caplets (4 mg) of Imodium® or a generic store brand for the first dose.
2. During the day, continue to take one caplet (2 mg) every two hours.
3. During the night, take two caplets (4 mg) at bedtime and two caplets every four hours. You will need to set your alarm clock to wake you during the night to take your Imodium® A-D or a generic store equivalent.
4. Do not stop taking your Imodium® A-D or a generic store brand until you have not had any bowel movements for at least 12 hours.

If your diarrhea lasts more than 24 hours despite taking the Imodium® or a generic store equivalent, please call the clinic (621-6100) and speak to a nurse.

Approved by the American College of Surgeons as a Comprehensive Community Cancer Program. Research conducted in association with Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.