

GMHC'S Nutrition & Wellness Program

DIARRHEA

SOME POSSIBLE CAUSES OF DIARRHEA

- Medications
- Viral, Bacterial, and/or Parasitic Infections
- Food Poisoning
- Emotional Stress
- Food Intolerance
- Sometimes the cause is unknown

IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING ADEQUATE NUTRITIONAL STATUS

- Diarrhea can cause weight loss, fluid loss, and an imbalance of electrolytes (sodium and potassium) levels. Weight loss and dehydration can lead to malnutrition which can also cause diarrhea. Therefore, if you are having diarrhea, it is important to maintain adequate nutritional status.

TREATMENT TIPS FOR DIARRHEA:

REPLACE BODY FLUIDS & ELECTROLYTES

- Drink fluids throughout the day, less at meal times.

Try beverages that provide water, electrolytes, and calories such as:

Diluted fruit juices (grape & cranberry are best tolerated)
Diluted fruit nectars (apricot, mango, peach)
Lactaid milk
Soup and broths
Gatorade and Powerade

- Replace minerals like sodium and potassium that are lost with diarrhea with mineral-rich foods.

Some potassium-rich foods to INCLUDE are:

Banana	Grapefruit	Potato
Orange	Melons	Tomato

- Consider taking a vitamin and mineral supplement to help replace what is being lost through diarrhea.

AVOID CAFFEINE

- Caffeine should be avoided because it stimulates the gut. It is best to avoid food or drinks such as chocolate, coffee, tea, and sodas.
- Choose decaf (herbal, chamomile) teas, coffee, and decaffeinated beverages.

LIMIT FOODS HIGH IN INSOLUBLE FIBER

- Certain foods that are high in **INSOLUBLE** fiber can irritate the intestines and potentially worsen diarrhea.

Some foods to AVOID are:

High Fiber Bran Cereals (Bran Flakes, All Bran, Raisin Bran)
Whole, unrefined grains or granola
Raw vegetables
Fruits and vegetables with skins
Whole kernel corn, nuts, seeds
Dried fruits with small seeds (berries, figs)
Prune juice

INCLUDE FOODS HIGH IN SOLUBLE FIBER

- Try to include foods that are high in **SOLUBLE** fiber; these foods help bulk up the stool.

Some foods to INCLUDE are:

Oatmeal
Skinned/pureed/canned/stewed fruits
Ripe bananas
Fruit sections without membranes
Applesauce or cooked peas
Mashed beans or tofu

INCLUDE EASY TO TOLERATE FOODS

- **EASY TO TOLERATE** foods can help decrease diarrhea.

Some foods to INCLUDE are:

Mashed potatoes
Most breads made with refined white flour
White rice, pasta, macaroni, or noodles
Cream of Wheat
Soft cooked/pureed vegetables without skins/seeds
Ready-to-eat cereal (Cheerios, Rice Krispies)
White toast, saltine crackers

R

Tips to REDUCE your FAT INTAKE are:

Avoid fried or greasy foods
Bake, broil, or steam instead

- Consider liquid nutrition supplements that are lower in fat or that contain MCT oil, which is a more easily digested fat and may be better tolerated. Ask your doctor or nutritionist about these supplements.
- Because reducing fat means reducing calories, you may need to make up the calories, by eating more carbohydrates and protein to maintain your weight.

MONITOR YOUR TOLERANCE OF DAIRY PRODUCTS

- Even if you were able to tolerate dairy products before, you may now be partially or totally lactose intolerant. This means your gut may have a harder time breaking down lactose. Lactose is the sugar in milk and dairy products including cheese and milk. Some signs and symptoms of intolerance may include diarrhea, gas, and bloating.
- Try to eliminate milk or milk products from the diet for a few days to see if symptoms improve.
- **Lactaid** tablets, drops, and ready-made **Lactaid** milk can aid in digesting these foods.
- Yogurt with live cultures is usually well tolerated.
- Find your level of tolerance by drinking a small amount, for example, ½ cup milk. Combining milk with other foods can also improve tolerance.

CONSIDER SUPPLEMENTS

- Some herbs that may help treat diarrhea are

Ginger Root, Meadowsweet, and Bayberry Root Bark. These herbs should be prepared as teas. Recommended dosages per cup of water include: Ginger Root- 2 teaspoons, Meadowsweet- 1-2 teaspoons (do not exceed 3 cups/day), Bayberry Root Bark- ½ teaspoon.

- **L. Acidophilus**, a "friendly" bacteria, may be taken to aid in digestion. This supplement should be purchased from a refrigerated section in a health food store and should be refrigerated after opening. Recommended amount is 2 capsules between meals or ¼ teaspoon of the powdered form dissolved in water 2 times a day (swish and swallow).
- Some cultures drink the water that rice is cooked in to treat diarrhea. This type of drink, **Amazake**, is available in health food stores.
- Some Asian cultures use **Kuzu**, the powdered root of the wild arrowroot, to treat diarrhea. Kuzu is mixed with water and taken as a thick beverage to soothe and strengthen the intestines.
- **Metamucil** or **Psyllium Husks** may be helpful. Start off slowly: 1 teaspoon added to ¼ cup water or diluted fruit juice and gradually work up to the recommended dose of 2 teaspoons taken 3 times a day.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day. Smaller meals are easier to digest.
- Try to avoid spices like curry, chili powder, and hot pepper sauces.
- Anti-diarrheal medications may also be prescribed by your doctor.
- Once the diarrhea has settled down, slowly add food back into your diet.