

Oncology Symptom: Diarrhea

What is diarrhea?

- Diarrhea is when you are having too many loose or watery stools.

What causes diarrhea?

- Diarrhea can be a side effect of chemotherapy, radiation, infection, or your disease.
- Chemotherapy and radiation can damage the cells that make up the lining of the intestines. Damage to the lining of the intestines can cause diarrhea, cramping, gas and bloating.
- Diarrhea may occur within 5 to 7 days after treatments.

What can happen if I get diarrhea?

- Frequent diarrhea can cause you to lose important nutrients and leave you weak and tired.

How will I know if I have diarrhea?

- More than 5 watery bowel movements a day may indicate diarrhea.

What should I do if I think I have diarrhea?

- You should **tell your doctor or nurse right away** if you notice any of the following things:
 - ✓ Red blood in your stools
 - ✓ Bowel movements turn a blackish color
 - ✓ Fever above 101° with the diarrhea.
 - ✓ More than 5 watery bowel movements a day and you are taking medicine to stop the diarrhea.

What can I do to prevent complications from diarrhea?

- ❑ Eat low-fiber foods such as skinless chicken or turkey, broiled or baked fish, cooked cereals, eggs, rice, creamy peanut butter, potatoes, processed cheese, gelatin and broth.
- ❑ Eat foods with pectin, like applesauce or bananas.
- ❑ Eat foods that are high in potassium like bananas or baked potatoes.
- ❑ Eat small, frequent meals instead of 3 large meals each day.
- ❑ Drink 6, 8-ounce glasses of water or fruit juices daily to prevent fluid loss from the diarrhea.
- ❑ Stay away from foods that are irritating such as nuts, seeds, whole grain cereals, rice or breads, apple juice, raw fruits and vegetables, rich desserts, and fried, greasy or spicy foods.
- ❑ Stay away from milk and milk products, especially if you've had problems with these foods in the past.
- ❑ Stay away from alcohol (including beer and wine) and tobacco.
- ❑ Keep your rectal area clean by using mild soap and water after each bowel movement. Rinse and dry your skin well. Soaking in a warm tub of water might also relieve soreness.
- ❑ Apply _____ ointment to your rectal area after each cleaning.
- ❑ Take the medications that your doctor ordered to help decrease diarrhea:

Medication _____

Dose _____

Frequency _____

Medication _____

Dose _____

Frequency _____