Diarrhea

Let’s talk about diarrhea...

- Diarrhea is an abnormal increase in stool liquidity and frequency.
- If you have diarrhea and a fever (temperature greater than 38°C), please contact your healthcare team immediately.
- If you have black stool or blood in your stool, go to the Emergency Room.
- If you are undergoing IMMUNOTHERAPY and have any diarrhea at all, contact your healthcare team as soon as possible. Delays can increase side effects and toxicity.
- If your diarrhea is intolerable, you have abdominal or rectal pain, you feel weak and dizzy, you have dark urine, or are urinating less, please contact your healthcare team.
- If you’re having a hard time keeping down liquids, please call your hospital’s symptom hotline (see bottom right corner).

What you can do

- Drink 6-8 glasses per day.
- Try eating 5-6 small meals.
- Avoid foods that can worsen diarrhea, such as: greasy/fried foods, spicy foods, alcohol, too much fruit juice or sweetened fruit drinks, raw vegetables, whole grain bread, nuts, popcorn, fruit skins, seeds, legumes, very hot or cold foods/liquids, sorbitol in sugar-free candy, lactose (in milk, cheese, yoghurt).
- Some foods that can lessen diarrhea: applesauce, oatmeal, bananas, barley, cooked carrots, rice, white toast, plain pasta, well-cooked eggs, skinless chicken, mashed potatoes, and fruit without skin.
- Replace lost electrolytes with bananas, potatoes, or sports drinks such as Gatorade, etc.

Other Considerations

- Speak to your healthcare team about medications you may be taking that can cause or worsen your diarrhea.
- Make sure to keep the skin around your rectum or ostomy clean to avoid skin breakdown.
- Carefully plan outings. Carry a change of clothes, know the location of restrooms, and use absorbent underwear.
- Keep record of the number of times a day you have diarrhea in order to inform your healthcare team.
- Speak to your healthcare team or pharmacist about medication that might help lessen your diarrhea.
- Speak to a dietitian for advice.

Other resources

Diarrhea Causes By Meds
Managing Diarrhea
More resources at mcgill.ca/rcr-rcn/patient

In your hospital

Symptom Hotlines
Don’t hesitate to call!
Hours of operation:
8AM to 4PM

MUHC: (514) 934-1934 ext. 34160
JGH: (514) 340-8222 ext. 25529
St. Mary’s: (514) 734-2679, ext. 5

Pharmacist
MUHC: (514) 934-1934 ext. 34121
JGH: (514) 340-8222 ext. 25940
St. Mary’s: (514) 345-3511 ext. 3670

Dietitian
MUHC: ask your doctor or nurse for a referral
JGH: ask your doctor or nurse for a referral
St. Mary’s: (514) 345-3511 ext. 3962

This information should not be considered as medical advice. It is not to be used in place of a visit with a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional. If you have questions about your individual medical situation, please consult with your healthcare professional.

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