

Managing Diarrhea, Constipation & Gas

Cancer and its treatments can cause diarrhea and/or constipation. It seems like diarrhea and constipation are side effects of almost every chemotherapy and medication you take to help with side effects. Diarrhea and constipation can lead to decreased appetite and intake. All of which can lead to weight loss, loss of strength, fatigue and dehydration. It is important to discuss these complaints with your medical team, even if they are not your favorite topic.

Diarrhea:

What is it?

- 3 or more loose stools a day

When to tell your medical team?

- when you have 3 or more loose stools a day, for 3 or more days
- when you have diarrhea within 30 minutes of eating
- cramping, sweating and/or dizziness with diarrhea that follows eating

Recommendations:

Often, diarrhea is caused by the treatment you are receiving. Changing what you eat isn't enough to fix the problem. You will likely need a medication or one of the products below.

- **Anti-diarrheal medication:** (Imodium) discuss with your physician and nurse.
- **Banatrol Plus:** banana flakes can be added to food or liquids to help bind stool. Take one packet, 3 times a day.
- **Enterade:** 8 oz. clear liquid amino acid drink 30 minutes before meal or 1 hour after, two times a day
- **Pectin:** mix 1 tablespoon of Pectin Powder to white rice or applesauce. Mix 10-15 ml Pectin Gel with rice or applesauce. Start with once a day and increase to 3 times a day.
- **Rice Porridge:** 1 cup long grain white rice, 6 cups water, 1 tablespoon salt. Combine all ingredients in saucepan and cook 40 minutes until rice is soft and sticky. Use beef, chicken or pork broth for added flavor.
- **Metamucil:** discuss using Metamucil with the dietitian.



Constipation:

Often, increasing intake of high fiber foods does not reverse constipation. It may lead to increased bloating and fullness.

- Discuss with your physician and nurse about taking a laxative
- Increase movement and/or physical activity – if unable to walk outside, try to be more active in the home. Any movement is helpful to keep your bowels moving.
- Increase fluid intake – fluid goal is about 64 ounces per day
 - * Remember that anything without caffeine or alcohol will be hydrating. If you don't want to drink water, choose a sports drink, flavored water, juice, etc.

Foods that cause gas:

- Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, mushroom
- Dried beans: kidney, black, baked beans
- Legumes: lentils, split peas
- Nuts: pistachios, cashews
- Dried fruits
- Apple juice and apple cider, prune juice
- Cereal with more than 5 grams of fiber per serving
- Garlic and onion
- Carbonated beverages

Ingredients to look for

- Inulin or chicory root
- Sugar alcohols: sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol (found in sugar free foods and low calorie shakes)

Other Suggestions

- Do not drink from a straw
- Do not chew gum
- Eat slowly and with your mouth closed to avoid swallowing air

Increase physical activity

- Increasing movement will help to move the gas along