

SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT: DIARRHEA

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Diarrhea is the presence of frequent, loose or watery stools. As a result, the body is unable to absorb important minerals, vitamins and water. Due to this loss of water, diarrhea may cause dehydration. Diarrhea may occur as part of an illness or as a side effect of a medication or treatment.

What helps to control diarrhea?

- **Drink 8-12 glasses of fluid a day.** Drinking liquids helps to replace those fluids that have been lost through diarrhea. Mild, clear liquids, such as water, clear broth, sports drinks, or ginger ale are best. Drink slowly and make sure drinks are at room temperature. Let carbonated drinks lose their fizz before drinking them. Avoid milk and milk products and restart them slowly when diarrhea subsides.
- **Eat small, frequent meals.**
- **Avoid foods and liquids that may stimulate the bowel** (whole grains, fresh fruits, prunes, raisins, seeds, and nuts) **Avoid gas producing foods** (cabbage, highly spiced foods, and beans).
- **Eat foods low in residue and high in protein and carbohydrates** (rice, cooked cereals, bananas, applesauce, macaroni, peanut butter, eggs, chicken, and fish).
- Unless the physician has directed otherwise, **eat potassium and sodium rich foods** (bananas, potatoes, apple juice, bouillon and grape juice).
- **Avoid caffeinated beverages, alcohol, and sweets.**

What personal care is helpful?

- Rest if feeling weak.
- Cleanse and dry anal area gently after each episode of diarrhea.
- Use skin protection or soothing agents in anal area to prevent soreness.
- ***If prescribed by the physician***, take anti-diarrhea medication.

When should I call the physician?

Notify your physician if the diarrhea persists for more than 2 days or if the stools become bloody.