



## Patient Education Sheet

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# How Can I Manage Diarrhea?

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Diarrhea is an abnormal increase in stool liquidity and occurrence (four or six stools or more per day). Diarrhea may be accompanied by abnormal cramping.

Here are simple tips and techniques that you can discuss with your healthcare provider to relieve diarrhea.

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## Most Helpful

- **Loperamide:** Loperamide, which slows down the movement of stool through the intestines, is standard treatment for chemotherapy-induced diarrhea. This drug is available over the counter.
- **Octreotide (short acting):** This injection can be used to treat diarrhea if loperamide doesn't help. It usually is given three times a day. Octreotide increases the amount of transit time needed for contents of the gut to move through the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.
- **Oral opiates:** If radiation treatments induce diarrhea, oral opiates are recommended. They slow down the body's ability to move stool through the intestines.

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## Likely to Be Helpful

- **Octreotide (long acting):** When diarrhea doesn't respond to loperamide, long-acting octreotide injection often is given, with or without gradually increasing the dosage as needed. It can help treat both chemotherapy- and radiation-induced diarrhea.
- **Probiotics:** These are "friendly" microorganisms (mostly bacteria) normally found in the intestine. They promote GI health by suppressing growth of "bad" microorganisms and optimizing immune responses in the gut. Probiotics also relieve irritation in the intestines. They may be used to treat or prevent diarrhea.
- **Psyllium fiber:** This is a soluble fiber that absorbs water and binds intestinal contents to create more normal bowel movements. Psyllium also has anti-inflammatory properties. It may be used to treat chemotherapy- and radiation-induced diarrhea.

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## May or May Not Be Helpful

- **Amifostine:** This drug selectively protects healthy tissue from chemotherapy's cytotoxic effects. It can be used to prevent diarrhea caused by chemotherapy. This medication is given via IV with certain types of chemotherapy. However, sometimes amifostine can cause a sharp drop in blood pressure.

