

Cancer and Nutrition: Foods to Manage Diarrhea



You need enough calories and protein during cancer treatment. The foods you choose can also help you cope with side effects of cancer and its treatment. One common side effect is diarrhea. Diarrhea is when you have bowel movements that are frequent, loose, and watery. It happens when waste passes too fast through your bowel. And your body is not able to absorb enough water that it needs.

Foods to eat

These are good food choices if you have diarrhea:

- Yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- White rice
- Noodles
- Potatoes without skin
- Farina or cream of wheat
- Eggs cooked until the whites are solid (not fried)
- Smooth peanut butter
- White bread
- Canned, peeled fruits
- Well-cooked vegetables
- Chicken or turkey without skin, lean beef, and fish (not fried)

It may help to eat small meals and snacks instead of 3 large meals a day. Eating foods rich in potassium and salt (sodium) are good choices. This can help replace electrolytes lost from diarrhea.

Foods to stay away from

Make sure **not** to eat:

- Fatty or fried foods
- Rich desserts, pastries, candies, jams, jellies, or preserves
- Raw vegetables or fruits
- Fruit seeds, skins, or stringy fibers
- Foods with a lot of fiber, such as broccoli, corn, beans, peas, cabbage, cauliflower, nuts, seeds, and dried fruit
- Sugar-free gum, candies or desserts made with sugar alcohols (such as sorbitol, or xylitol)
- Spicy foods

- Alcohol
- Foods or drinks with caffeine

You may also need to avoid have milk or dairy foods. If you are not able to digest the lactose in these foods, your symptoms may get worse.

Get enough to drink

Diarrhea may cause dehydration. This means you don't have enough water in your body. It's vital when you have diarrhea to drink at least 8 to 12 cups of fluids a day or as advised by your provider. Drink liquids that are at room temperature. If you have a sudden bout of diarrhea, drink only clear liquids such as water, broth, and sports drinks for a short time. This lets your bowel rest. And it replaces the fluids lost during the diarrhea.

Medicine

Your provider may also advise medicine to help stop diarrhea. Take it exactly as directed.

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