

## **Patient Advisory**

### **Adult diarrhea**

#### **About diarrhea**

Diarrhea is an increase of volume, frequency or fluidity of stool lasting for 14 days or less. WHO defines diarrhea as the passing of three or more loose, watery stools per day.

#### **Common Causes**

Some of the common causes of diarrhea in Adults are:

- Viral or bacterial infections
- Protozoan infection
- Intolerance to certain foods such as high fat diet or food allergies
- Digestive disorders like crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis or celiac disease
- Stress, anxiety or nervousness
- Reaction to certain medicines such as antibiotic administration

#### **Diagnosis of the causes of Diarrhea**

A medical history and a physical examination are usually sufficient to diagnose the condition. Occasionally your physician may conduct some tests to diagnose the underlying pathology if the diarrhea doesn't respond to initial treatment or the condition worsens.

#### **When to contact a Doctor**

**Call your doctor immediately if the following warning signs appear:**

- The patient has not passed urine for last 8 to 12 hours or has passed a small amount of dark urine
- Profuse diarrhea (Passage of  $\geq 6$  unformed stools per 24 hours or illness that lasts more than 48 hours)
- Blood in the stool
- Persistent vomiting
- Severe headache
- Severe pain in the abdomen or rectum
- Presence of high fever or persistent fever
- Convulsions or loss of consciousness
- Abdominal distension
- Drowsiness or listlessness
- Excessive sleepiness

#### **Treatment**

The treatment for watery diarrhea includes fluid replacement and nutritional supplements. Your Doctor may prescribe medications to resolve other symptoms associated with diarrhea. Non-sedative antiemetics may be given for vomiting.

Antibiotics are not warranted as first line medication for diarrhea and you should only take them if your doctor prescribes them.

Your doctor would warn you against the side effects of some of the medications for diarrhea. Side effects of some are listed below:

- Loperamide: Abdominal pain, distention and discomfort; constipation, dry mouth, drowsiness, dizziness, fatigue, rash
- Racecadotril: Vomiting, nausea, constipation, abdominal pain, thirst and headache.
- Ciprofloxacin: Gastrointestinal disturbances; headache; joint pain
- Doxycycline: Staining of teeth; rash, super infection; nausea, GI upsets
- Metronidazole: GI disturbances e.g. nausea, unpleasant metallic taste, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation
- Cotrimoxazole: GI disturbances
- Azithromycin: Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dyspepsia, flatulence, diarrhea, cramping
- Ampicillin: GI upset, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Dicyclomine: Difficulty in accommodation, exacerbation of glaucoma; tachycardia, palpitations
- Domperidone: Drowsiness, constipation or diarrhea

## Care and Prevention

You may follow some simple measures to prevent and reduce the impact of diarrhea:

Dietary advice:

- Give ORS to drink as advised by the doctor
- If diarrhea continues after 4 hours give either 120 to 240ml (half – 1 cup) ORS or liquids easily available at home to drink. Homemade ORS, coconut water, rice kanji, dal, chaas, lassi with salt etc are recommended.
- ORS can be prepared at home by mixing six teaspoonfuls of sugar, half teaspoonful of table salt in one litre (5 cupfuls, each cup about 200 ml) of clean drinking water or water cooled after boiling.
- Do not give tea, colas, fruits or fluids with extra sugar
- Avoid milk, milk products (butter and ghee) and high fiber foods that may aggravate your condition
- A bland diet is recommended for 1 – 2 days. Give food like khicdi (rice gruel), rice and curd, boiled vegetables, soups and bananas.

Lifestyle advice:

- Wash hands with soap and water before handling food and after using the toilet
- Use water for drinking that is from a safe source or is purified. In case water is stored, keep it in clean and covered containers.
- Wash all food that is consumed raw, in clean preferably warm water
- Eat freshly prepared food from clean utensils
- Store food hygienically in clean, covered containers at optimum temperature
- Reheat stored food well and ensure it is not spoilt before consuming
- Use proper sanitary latrine. Ensure that the latrine is clean and dry after use and is placed away from water sources
- Dispose waste and refuse in covered dustbins away from water sources or food
- Protect food from insects and animals as they carry pathogenic organisms and are potential sources of contamination of food
- Inform the nearest primary health centre (PHC) if there is an outbreak of diarrhea in the neighborhood

- Avoid over the counter medications to control diarrhea

**Caution Notice**

This information is not a substitute for a Doctor's advice. Only your Doctor can weigh all the diverse aspects of your condition and choose the treatment most likely to meet your needs.