

# Diarrhea

## Just the Facts

**D**iarrhea is frequent bowel movements with the stools having a more or less fluid consistency. Diarrhea is caused by the conditioning chemotherapy or radiation, medications and sometimes emotional distress. Report diarrhea because it can lead to dehydration and loss of electrolytes. It is not always possible to prevent diarrhea.

## Your Goals:

- ✓ Prevent dehydration.
- ✓ Prevent infection.
- ✓ Call for professional help when needed.

## Urgent Signs and Symptoms:

**Call the Clinic or the After Hours Clinic NOW if:**

- ☐ Constant or uncontrolled diarrhea.
- ☐ Stool which is bloody, burgundy or black.
- ☐ Fever and abdominal stomach cramping.

## Important Signs and Symptoms:

**Report symptoms to doctor or nurse during clinic hours today.**

- ☐ New onset of diarrhea.
- ☐ Diarrhea more than 5 times a day.
- ☐ Mild abdominal stomach cramping.
- ☐ Whole pills passed in the stool.

## What You Can Do At Home:

### Prevent dehydration.

- ➡ Drink fluids (in suggested amounts).
- ➡ Follow dietary recommendations. Note any food allergies or intolerances and discuss with the nurse, doctor or dietitian.

### Prevent infection and irritation.

- ➡ Wash hands often, with warm water and soap.
- ➡ Keep rectal area clean with mild soap and water.
- ➡ Do not use ointment or creams on the rectal area unless directed by the nurse or doctor.
- ➡ Use white non-perfumed toilet paper.

### Call for professional help when needed.

- ➡ Be able to describe the type of diarrhea for the health care staff, including how often, consistency, color and presence of cramping.