

Diarrhea is loose, watery, frequent stools. Diarrhea can be uncomfortable, make you or your loved one feel weak, and can lead to dehydration if left untreated.

- Factors that may cause diarrhea include:
 - Diet changes
 - Stress and anxiety
 - Severe constipation, sometimes referred to as impaction
 - Medications such as laxatives, antibiotics, dementia medications, cholesterol medications, and more
 - Problems such as pancreatic insufficiency, inflammatory bowel disease, hyperthyroidism, and infections
- Non-medication ways to treat diarrhea also help prevent it. They include:
 - Drink plenty of clear fluids such as water, diluted fruit juice, broth, and low-calorie sports drinks
 - Eat small meals throughout the day. Include bland foods like banana, rice, applesauce, and plain toast.
 - Avoid eating spicy and fatty foods
 - Avoid drinking milk/dairy, sugary or caffeinated sodas, energy drinks and high-calorie sports drinks
 - Avoid alcohol
 - Consult your hospice team about stopping or decreasing the dosage of medications causing diarrhea
 - Removal of impacted stool by member of your hospice team
- Medications used to treat diarrhea include:

Medication	Notes
Loperamide* (Imodium®)	Few side effects and is generally well tolerated.
Diphenoxylate-atropine* (Lomotil®)	Side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, headache, nausea/vomiting and dry mouth.
Bismuth subsalicylate* (Pepto Bismol®)	May interfere with the absorption of other medications. Administer other medications at least 1 hour before or at least 4-6 hours after each dose to minimize this.
Cholestyramine powder* (Questran®, Questran® Light)	May interfere with the absorption of other medications. Administer other medications at least 1 hour before or at least 4-6 hours after each dose to minimize this. Mix in 60-120 ml of water, milk, fruit juice, or other non-carbonated beverage and refrigerate overnight to improve taste.

- Talk with the hospice care team before starting or stopping medications for diarrhea. Diarrhea usually resolves within 48 hours after treatment is started.
- If there are worsening symptoms or any changes or such as increased thirst, fever, muscle cramps, dizziness, headache, dry mouth, cracked lips, dark urine, or stomach pain, talk with your care team.

References:

1. Clinical Pharmacology [database online]. Tampa, FL: Elsevier/Gold Standard, Inc.; 2019. Accessed 2024 December.
2. Jozwiak R. Diarrhea. In: Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin Fast Facts. September 2024.