Diarrhoea

When chemotherapy affects the cells lining the intestine, the result can be diarrhoea (loose stools). If you have diarrhoea that continues for more than 24 hours, or if you have pain and cramping along with the diarrhoea, call your doctor. In severe cases, the doctor may prescribe an antidiarrheal medicine. However, you should not take any over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicines without asking your doctor first. You can also try these ideas to help control diarrhoea:

- Eat smaller amounts of food, but eat more often.
- Avoid high-fiber foods, which can lead to diarrhoea and cramping. High-fiber foods include whole-grain breads and cereals, raw vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds, popcorn, and fresh and dried fruit. Eat low-fiber foods, instead. Low-fiber foods include white bread, white rice or noodles, creamed cereals, ripe bananas, canned or cooked fruit without skins, cottage cheese, yogurt, eggs, mashed or baked potatoes without the skin, pureed vegetables, chicken or turkey without the skin, and fish.
- Avoid coffee, tea, alcohol, and sweets. Stay away from fried, greasy, or highly spiced foods, too. They are all irritating foods and can cause diarrhoea and cramping.
- Avoid milk and milk products if they make your diarrhoea worse. Thin buttermilk (chhach) is often well tolerated.
- Unless your doctor has told you otherwise, eat more potassium- rich foods because diarrhoea can cause you to lose this important mineral. Bananas, oranges, potatoes, and peach and apricot nectars are good sources of potassium.
- Drink plenty of fluids to replace those you have lost through diarrhoea. Mild, clear liquids, such as apple juice, water, weak tea, clear broth, or ginger ale are best. Drink them slowly, and make sure they are at room temperature. Let carbonated drinks lose their fizz before you drink them.
- If your diarrhoea is severe, it is important to let your doctor know. Ask your doctor if you should try a clear liquid diet to give your bowels time to rest. As you feel better, you gradually can add the low-fiber foods listed above. A clear liquid diet doesn't provide all the nutrients you need, so don't follow one for more than 3 to 5 days.
- If your diarrhoea is very severe, you may need to get intravenous fluids to replace the water and nutrients you have lost.

Constipation

Some people who get chemotherapy become constipated because of the drugs they are taking. Others may become constipated because they are less active or less nourished than usual. Tell your doctor if you have not had a bowel movement for more than a day or two. You may need to take a laxative or stool softener or use an enema, but don't use these remedies unless you have checked with your doctor, especially if your white blood cell count is low. You also can try these ideas to deal with constipation:

- Drink plenty of fluids to help loosen the bowels. Warm and hot fluids work especially well
- Eat a lot of high-fiber foods. High-fiber foods include bran, whole-wheat breads and cereals, raw or cooked vegetables, fresh and dried fruit, nuts, and popcorn.

•	Get some exercise. Simply getting out for a walk can help, as can a more structured exercise program. Be sure to check with your doctor before becoming more active.