

# Diarrhea

## Information for Patients on Cancer Treatment

Diarrhea happens when you have more loose, watery poos than normal. You may also have stomach pain and bloating when you have diarrhea.

There are many causes of diarrhea, including:

- Cancer and its treatments
- Medications
- Infections
- Some herbal medications

### What should I do if I have diarrhea?

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of water per day
- Stop any laxatives you normally take
- Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day
- Avoid caffeine, pop, and sugar-free drinks
- Avoid foods high in fats, grease, or fibre
- Ask your healthcare team if electrolyte drinks are right for you
- Take a sitz bath to clean the skin around your bum area

### Sitz Bath Instructions

- Mix 1 to 2 tablespoons of baking soda or salt with warm water to the bathtub or a large basin
- Soak your bum area for 10 to 15 minutes in water

## Can I take medications for my diarrhea?

Your healthcare team may tell you to take loperamide (Imodium®) if you have diarrhea. If your nurse, doctor, or pharmacist has told you to take loperamide (Imodium®), do not follow the instructions on the box. Instead:

- Take 2 tablets (4 mg) after the first loose poo
- Take 1 tablet (2 mg) with each loose poo afterwards
- Do not take more than 8 tablets (16 mg) per day

If you still have diarrhea after taking Imodium® for 24 hours, call the clinic or the After-Hours Symptom Management line.

### **Call the Clinic Nurse at (416) 469-6580 ext. 2752 if:**

- You have more than 7 loose poos in 24 hours
- You are taking diarrhea medications as instructed with no relief for over 24 hours
- You see blood in your diarrhea
- You are not eating or drinking because of your diarrhea

### **Go to your nearest Emergency Department if:**

- You have a fever with diarrhea
- You have new and severe stomach pain that is not from diarrhea
- You cannot reach your healthcare team and you have the symptoms listed above