

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is liquid stool. It happens when the intestines do not absorb enough water from the stool. This problem happens when food goes through the intestines too fast for it to be digested. Diarrhea can cause dehydration and skin sores. This lesson will review causes, signs, treatment and prevention of diarrhea.

Causes

- Illness like flu, stomach virus
- Stress
- Possible impaction
- Certain medicines such as antibiotics
- Too many stool softeners or laxatives

Signs: Loose, watery stool

Treatment

If diarrhea starts after several days of not having any stool then you are having an impaction (see lesson I on Impaction). If you are not impacted, try the following steps:

- Stop taking stool softeners or laxatives until diarrhea has stopped.
- Stop doing your bowel program until diarrhea has stopped.
- Protect your skin with a skin barrier like A&D ointment, Desitin or Vaseline.
- Avoid foods that make diarrhea worse (spicy foods, raw vegetables, fruits).
- Avoid alcoholic drinks.
- Drink clear liquids (more than usual).
- Call the doctor if this lasts longer than 24 hours.
- Wait for 24 hours after the last diarrhea stool to begin your regular bowel program. For example, if the diarrhea stops on Wednesday night, start your next bowel program on Thursday night.
- If it is OK with your doctor, you may try some over-the-counter diarrhea medications.

Prevention

- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Avoid foods/drinks that cause diarrhea.
- If you are taking antibiotics, start eating yogurt, drinking buttermilk or taking Lactinex tablets.