



DIARRHEA



often

DIARRHEA is the passage of many loose, watery or unformed bowel movements. This is a symptom, not a disease.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

- Cramping abdominal pain
- Loose, watery or unformed bowel movements.
- Lack of bowel control (sometimes)
- Fever (sometimes)

CAUSES:

- **Infections** - Parasites or bacteria found in tap water and food. Viral illnesses may also cause diarrhea.
- **Food intolerance or allergy** - Diarrhea can result from intolerance or an allergy to certain foods. Milk and wheat products are the most common culprit.
- **Use of drugs** -Such as laxatives, antacids, antibiotics, quinine or anticancer drugs.
- **Overindulgence** -Excessive consumption of certain food and alcohol can result in diarrhea. Prunes and beans are two foods that may cause it.
- **Menstruation** - Many women experience mild diarrhea either immediately before or during menstruation.
- **Stress** - Emotional stress sometimes causes diarrhea. Once the stressful situation has passed, the diarrhea usually stops.
- **Irritable Bowel Syndrome or Spastic Colon:** This type of diarrhea may be caused by periods of emotional stress. Other symptoms may include abdominal pain, bloating, and constipation.

TREATMENT: Diarrhea usually clears up within a few days. However, you can relieve the symptoms of diarrhea by doing the following:

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Replace lost fluids and electrolytes with a commercial rehydration product such as Gatorade.
- **Restrict what you eat.** Avoid alcohol, caffeine, milk and dairy products, spicy, fried and junk food. After 12 hours without diarrhea, try a diet of clear soup, salted crackers, dry toast or bread.
- **Resume a normal diet after 24-48 hours after the diarrhea stops.** Continue to avoid alcohol and highly seasoned foods for several more days.
- **Medication** - for minor discomfort you may use non-prescription drugs such as Pepto-Bismol, (be aware that due to the Bismuth in it, your stools may turn black), or Imodium A-D. Follow the package directions for the non-prescription medication.

RETURN TO SEE THE DOCTOR IF:

- Diarrhea lasts more than 48 hours.
- Mucus, blood, or worms appear in the stool.
- Fever rises to 101°F. (38.3 C) or higher.
- Severe pain develops in the abdomen or rectum,
- Dehydration develops - signs = dry mouth, wrinkled skin, excess thirst, little or no urination.

PREVENTION: Everyone is likely to have bouts of diarrhea occasionally from insignificant causes that disappear and leave no lasting effects. Most cases of acute diarrhea last a short time and a search for the cause may not be necessary. Avoid undercooked or raw seafood, buffet or picnic foods left out several hours and food served by street vendors.