



Diarrhea

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Foreword

Diarrhea is defined as loose or watery stools that occur three or more times a day. Diarrhea can be caused by many factors, including bacterial and viral infections, drugs, certain foods or beverages, anxiety, chemotherapy as well as from hepatitis C treatment.

Regular diarrhea may last for 1 or 2 days and will generally improve on its own. However, diarrhea that lasts longer than 2 days can cause problems and should be taken very seriously.

Symptoms

The hallmark of diarrhea is watery stools, but other symptoms can occur such as cramping, bloating, pain, and nausea. In severe cases a person may have a fever and/or bloody stools.

Diarrhea can greatly affect health, as well as adherence to and absorption of treatment medications; so it is important to be as proactive as possible in treating diarrhea as soon as the symptoms appear. Diarrhea can lead to dehydration and reduced quality of life, as well as contribute to nutrient deficiencies.

Notify your medical provider immediately if you have any of the following:

- Severe diarrhea that lasts longer than two days
- Dramatic weight loss that occurs in one day (5 lbs or more)
- Blood in the stool or around the anal area
- Black stools
- Uncontrolled fever, fever higher than 102 F, or fever that lasts more than 24 hours
- Severe stomach or intestinal cramping

HCSP FACT SHEET

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The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you understand and manage HCV and is not intended as medical advice. All persons with HCV should consult a medical practitioner for diagnosis and treatment of HCV.

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Managing Diarrhea

Prolonged diarrhea can cause many health problems. The most common problem associated with diarrhea is dehydration. For this reason it is important to stay well-hydrated by drinking adequate amounts of water or clear liquids. There are many more steps that people can take to monitor, control and manage diarrhea such as:

- Drink clear fluids, such as water, weak tea, broth (vegetable, chicken and beef), popsicles, gelatin
- Eat small, healthy frequent meals – eat bland foods
- Keep track of bowel movements
- Eat foods that are high in potassium, such as bananas and potatoes

Avoid these drinks, foods and vegetables:

- High fiber foods, such as whole grain breads and cereals
- Milk and dairy products
- Spicy, fried and greasy foods
- Pork, veal, salmon and sardines
- Raw vegetables
- Raw fruits
- Caffeinated drinks
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tobacco products
- Hot or cold foods and beverages

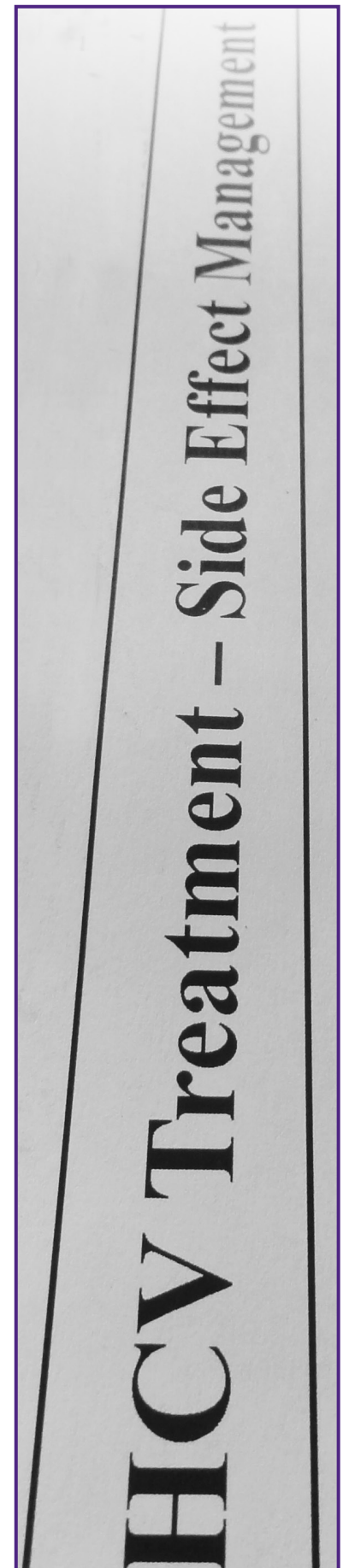
If diarrhea improves, start eating small amounts of easily digestible foods, such as those listed in the BRAT diet:

- o **B**ananas
- o **R**ice
- o **A**pplesauce
- o **T**oast

Talk with a medical provider about other foods to eat once the diarrhea has started to get better, including noodles, yogurt, weak tea, crackers, and chicken stock.

Care

Diarrhea can make the area around the anus dry and chafed. After a bowel movement wash and rinse the area around the anus with warm soapy water or



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baby wipes and pat dry with a soft tissue or cloth. Apply a water repellent cream around the anal area to help with possible pain, irritation and discomfort. A warm sitz bath (also called a hips bath – sitting in a bathtub filled with warm water) may help to relieve some of the pain and discomfort as well as help you to relax.

Severe diarrhea should be reported to your medical provider immediately. Your provider may recommend an over-the-counter medication such as Immodium, and/or prescribe medication to treat diarrhea. Never self-medicate.

Controlling diarrhea is another important part of taking care of yourself while on treatment. It will ensure that you stay healthy and feel better. It is also important to control diarrhea so that your body absorbs the right amount of the drugs to help you achieve a viral cure.

Related publications:

- **A Guide to Hepatitis C: Treatment Side Effect Management**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/Treatment_Side_Effect_Guide.pdf
- **HCSP Factsheet: Managing Side Effects of HCV Treatment**
www.hcvadvocate.org/hepatitis/factsheets_pdf/SEM_SideEffects.pdf

For more information

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans with Disabilities Act
 www.ada.gov • Centers for Disease Control
 www.cdc.gov | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and Drug Administration (FDA):
 www.fda.gov • Mayo Clinic
 www.mayoclinic.com |
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Visit our websites to learn more about viral hepatitis:

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