

Nutrition and Dietetics

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is when your bowel movements become more frequent and less formed. Diarrhoea can happen as a result of an infection, medication side effect, treatment, surgery. Stressful situations or increased anxiety may also affect your bowels.

Diarrhoea is a symptom and can be acute (lasting 2-3 days) or chronic (long term). It's important to talk to a doctor to find out why you have diarrhoea. A once daily stool, no matter how soft, is not diarrhoea. There are medications to help control or stop diarrhoea.

Acute diarrhoea (lasting 2-3 days)

- You need to drink lots of fluids to avoid getting dehydrated. Try small regular sips of drinks like squash, diluted fruit juice, or soup. Aim for at least 8-10 cups every day. Avoid drinking alcohol as it can stop your body reabsorbing water in the bowel.
- Try to eat as often as you can. Have small frequent meals and snacks rather than large meals.
- Try to eat a wide variety of foods as much as you can. There is very little evidence to suggest you should avoid certain foods. Limiting your diet can result in an insufficient intake of the nutrients your body needs and may slow down recovery.
- Try to avoid artificial sweeteners such as mannitol, sorbitol and xylitol. These can have a laxative effect and make diarrhoea worse.
- Foods that may help ease diarrhoea are white bread, pasta, boiled rice, marshmallows, ripe bananas, porridge, smooth peanut butter, oatmeal, and instant mashed potato.



Patient Information

- Certain foods are thought to be irritants to your gut and so it may be worth trying to limit these:
 - caffeine containing drinks such as coffee, tea and cola
 - pure fruit juice, try diluting with water
 - spicy or highly seasoned foods
 - limit or avoid sugar free drinks
- If diarrhoea does not settle, speak to your doctor who may prescribe some antidiarrheal medication.

Chronic diarrhoea (long term)

If the diarrhoea continues even after the tests and medications, you may need to try a different diet to help relieve your symptoms. Ask your doctor or nurse if you can see a dietitian. They can help you figure out which foods might be causing problems while still making sure you eat a healthy diet.

Local dietetic department contact details:

Coventry Dietitians	024 7696 6161
Nuneaton Dietitians	024 7686 5098
Redditch and Bromsgrove Dietitians	01527 512043
Warwick Dietitians	01926 495321 extension 4258

This information has been produced by Coventry Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, contact 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History

Department:	Dietetics
Contact:	26161
Updated:	April 2024
Review:	April 2027
Version:	9.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/460/07