



Integrative Therapies Program for  
Children with Cancer  
Herbert Irving Cancer Center, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor

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## COPING WITH DIARRHEA

### General Guidelines That Help:

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day instead of three large meals.
- Do not offer foods at extreme temperatures (very hot or cold). Extreme temperatures can facilitate the digestive process and could enhance diarrhea.
- Serve plenty of liquids throughout the day. Cold or room temperature liquids are best tolerated.
- Serve foods high in sodium and potassium in order to replace lost essential nutrients. See list below.
- Limit foods that contain sorbitol. Typically this is found in sugar-free gums, candies and some supplements
- Serve foods high in pectin (applesauce, bananas).
- Limit or avoid foods that can cause bloating and gas (beans, carbonated beverages, seeds and seeded products).
- Limit milk products to no more than 2 cups per day. Some children will do better if milk products are totally eliminated while undergoing therapy regimens that induce diarrhea.
- Limit high-fiber fruits and raw vegetables (broccoli, corn, cauliflower, peas, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage).
- Limit high sugar foods (chocolate, candy, cookies, cakes, muffins).
- Other foods to limit: caffeine-containing beverages, fried, greasy, strong spices, and high-sugar foods.

### Foods that may help:

- High potassium foods- bananas, peaches, apricots, nectar, boiled/mashed potatoes, avocados, blackstrap molasses, dates, garlic, potatoes, winter squash, and yams.
- High sodium foods- any flavored broth, salted pretzels, or Saltine crackers
- Plain or vanilla yogurt (limit consumption to 1-2 servings/day). This should not be used if your child is feeling sensitive to milk products.
- White rice with broth, noodles.
- Farina, Cream of Wheat.
- Boiled or scrambled eggs.
- Canned or cooked fruits without skins.
- Smooth peanut butter (no nuts).
- Chicken or turkey baked/broiled, not fried.
- White bread.
- Vegetables should be peeled, canned or frozen (skin free).
- BRAT diet- bananas, rice, applesauce, and herbal tea or toast.

### Herbs/Complementary Therapies that may help:

*\*The use of herbs is not recommended. The information is provided because many have inquired about these particular agents. Although, the following herbs have not been found to be harmful in small studies, there is still limited information available about their use in children in conjunction with chemotherapy. It is imperative that the use of herbs be discussed with your child's physician before proceeding with any of these therapies.*

There are numerous herbs that have been shown to alleviate diarrhea in adults and children, but the herb of choice will depend on the cause of the diarrhea. If possible, it would be best to consult an herbalist who will work with your child's medical team.

The following herbs are good for bacteria- or viral-induced diarrhea:

- Goldenseal
- Organ Grapefruit
- Barberry.

Herbs good for more non-specific causes:

- Grapefruit seed extract
- Bilberry
- Witch Hazel
- Slippery Elm
- L-glutamine- This is a supplement that has been shown in clinical trials to alleviate mouth sores associated with chemotherapy in children. Although, no trials have been done regarding children and chemotherapy induced-diarrhea, the theoretical basis is similar. This supplement has repeatedly been shown to be non-toxic when administered to children. The dose for mouth sores is 2g/kg/ two times per day.

Helpful teas:

- 3 tbsp of dried blueberries, add to water and simmer. Strain and give the water as a room-temperature drink.
- Chamomile tea- Combine with slippery elm or raspberry leaf.

Massages:

- Massage up and down the center of your child's sacrum (tailbone) with the heel of your hand. You should go from the tip of the tailbone down to the top of their bottom.

Massage Oils:

For any massage oils, the oil should not be applied directly to your child's skin. Oils should first be diluted in a carrier oil (Almond, Grapeseed, or Sesame). To ensure the quality of the essential oils you purchase, all bottles should state the plant species the oil is from.

*Dosage for children of essential oils:*

Up to 2 years old: 5 drops of essential oil in 50 ml or lotion or carrier oil

2 years and older: 10 drops of essential oil in 50 ml of lotion or carries oil

*Essential Oils that my help:*

- Chamomile, geranium, lavender, ginger, sweet marjoram, or mandarin. Apply the massage oils with any of these essential oils directly to your child's stomach and massage in.