

Problems With Digestion

Renal
Dietitians

a dietetic practice group of the
Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics



Everyone has problems with digestion at one time or another. Common problems with digestion are: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation. Read below to find helpful hints to help you with these problems.

Nausea

Nausea (NAW-see-uh) is an upset stomach that may stop you from wanting to eat. Some people also call this being “queasy”. It may or may not come before vomiting.

DO:

DON'T:

To avoid nausea:

- * Eat small meals 4-6 times each day instead of fewer larger meals.
- * Eat slowly and relax before and after meals.
- * Drink liquids one hour before or after meals (not during).

- ⊗ Make yourself eat when your stomach is upset.
- ⊗ Drink liquids during a meal.
- ⊗ Smell odors from cooking food, especially frying foods.

TRY:

Have nausea?

- Eating dry crackers, toast, or a popsicle.
- Drinking ginger ale, ginger tea, or peppermint tea to calm down an upset stomach that may be causing your nausea.

Vomiting

Vomiting (VOM-it-ing) is when the contents of your stomach come out through the mouth. It is also called “throwing up”. This causes you to lose fluids and foods, and can lead to dehydration (not having enough water in your body).

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU MIGHT VOMIT:

- Lie down in a room with a lot of ventilation (air flow).
- Keep your head and shoulders above the rest of your body, such as propped up on a pillow.
- Loosen or take off tight clothing.
- Put a cool, damp cloth over your forehead, face, and neck.

IF YOU DO VOMIT:

- Drink clear liquids and juices such as tea, apple juice, cranberry juice, grape juice, or sports drinks.
- Eat gelatin, clear soup broth, or popsicles to help replace fluids.



Diarrhea

Diarrhea (Die-er-EE-uh) is when your stools (bowel movements) are loose, watery, and frequent. Diarrhea can cause you to lose large amounts of water and important minerals. It can be due to an infection.

Have diarrhea?

DO:

- * Drink clear liquids and juices such as tea, apple juice, cranberry juice, grape juice, or sports drinks.
- * Eat bland foods like crackers, dry toast, or cereal.



DON'T:

- ⊗ Drink caffeine or alcohol.
- ⊗ Eat foods with a lot of spices.
- ⊗ Eat sweets such as cookies, pies, cakes, donuts, candy, etc.
- ⊗ Eat raw vegetables and fruit.
- ⊗ Eat uncooked foods.
- ⊗ Eat fried or greasy foods.
- ⊗ Eat bran or whole grain cereal.
- ⊗ Eat nuts, beans, peas, or relish.

TRY:

Medication

- Imodium AD (also known as loperamide), which you can find over-the-counter, without a prescription.
- Lomotil (also known as diphenoxylate), which is a prescription from your doctor.

Constipation

Constipation (kon-sti-PAY-shun) is very slow or infrequent bowel movements (less than two movements per week). It can also be dry or hardened stools.

Constipation and Renal Patients

People on dialysis often complain of constipation. There are many causes:

- Medication for pain and phosphate binders.
- Low-fiber renal diet.
- Not drinking enough fluids.
- Lack of exercise.
- Nerve damage in your colon from diabetes.



To Avoid and Treat Constipation

DIET:

- Increase fiber. Instead of fruit juice, eat the fruit.
- Drink a cup of hot tea, coffee, or a cup of hot water with a squeeze of lemon early in the morning when you wake up.
- Follow the meal plan set up by your dietitian.

ROUTINE:

- Get regular sleep - go to bed and get up at the same time everyday.
- Get regular exercise to keep your bowels regular. Try walking, bicycling, swimming, or gardening.
- Don't ignore the need to use the bathroom for a bowel movement.

Medication

Natural fibers: Benefiber, Metamucil, or Citrucel
Stool Softeners: Dulcolax, Colace, or store brand stool softener.
Laxatives: Miralax (Polyethylene glycol), Sorbitol, or Lactulose.