

## Treating Diarrhea Caused by Radiation

Radiation treatment over the belly or abdomen area can cause loose stools or diarrhea. Two types of medicines can help. Loperamide (brand name Imodium<sup>®</sup>) is available without a prescription at drug and grocery stores. Your doctor may also prescribe Lomotil<sup>®</sup> (prescription only).

Follow this treatment plan:

**Step 1:** Take one Imodium or Imodium AD<sup>®</sup> tablet after each loose stool. You may take up to 8 (2 milligram) Imodium tablets every 24 hours. If you continue to have loose stools within a 24-hour period go to Step 2.

**Step 2:** Alternate taking 1 Lomotil tablet and 2 Imodium tablets every three hours, as shown below in the chart. (L = Lomotil; I = Imodium).

Time	7 a.m.	10 a.m.	1 p.m.	4 p.m.	7 p.m.	10 p.m.	1 a.m.	4 a.m.
Medicine and Dose	1 L	2 I	1 L	2 I	1 L	2 I	1 L	2 I

- Start a low fiber diet. Ask your doctor or nurse for a referral to talk with a dietitian.
- You must drink least 8 glasses of fluid, 8-ounce size each within 24 hours. The fluid may include water, Gatorade<sup>®</sup>, caffeine-free and non-carbonated drinks.

If this schedule does not help control loose stools or diarrhea within 24 hours, go to Step 3.

**Step 3:** Alternate taking 2 Lomotil tablets and 2 Imodium tablets or Imodium AD every six hours, as shown below in the chart.

Time	7 a.m.	10 a.m.	1 p.m.	4 p.m.	7 p.m.	10 p.m.	1 a.m.	4 a.m.
Medicine and Dose	2 L	2 I	2 L	2 I	2 L	2 I	2 L	2 I

- Continue the low fiber diet.
- Continue to drink least 8 glasses of fluid, 8-ounce size each, within 24 hours. The fluid may include water, Gatorade<sup>®</sup>, caffeine-free and non-carbonated drinks.
- Once diarrhea seems to be under control (no bowel movement for at least 12 hours) then reduce the number of Imodium or Imodium AD that you are taking.

If this schedule does not help control your loose stool or diarrhea, contact your radiation oncology nurse at 1-844-632-2278 during regular business hours. On weekends and holidays, call 1-844-632-2278 and ask the operator to page the radiation doctor on call.

## **Resources**

**Visit the American Cancer Society:**

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/physicalsideeffects/dealingwithsymptomsathome/caring-for-the-patient-with-cancer-at-home-diarrhea>

Reviewed 10/2019