

Pelvic Radiation and Your Diet

Radiation therapy to the pelvic area can affect the way your body digests and absorbs nutrients and fluids. A common side effect of radiation to the abdomen is **diarrhea** (loose, watery, frequent stools) due to irritation to the bowel. This side effect should disappear in a few weeks after your treatment. The purpose of these nutrition guidelines is to help you find foods and beverages you can tolerate well to minimize your symptoms of diarrhea and to help your body stay well-nourished during and after your therapy.

TIPS:

- **Foods rich in water-soluble fibers** (such as oats, applesauce, and bananas) are helpful to reduce diarrhea. Foods high in insoluble fibers (whole grains, bran, seeds, skins of fresh fruits and vegetables) should be avoided as they can irritate your bowel during pelvic radiation therapy.
- **Avoid deep-fried, greasy foods** and foods high in fat: they will aggravate your diarrhea symptoms.
- **Limit fats and oils** to 3-5 servings daily. One serving is equal to :
 - 1 teaspoon margarine, butter, oil, cream cheese or mayonnaise.
 - 1 tablespoon diet margarine, light mayonnaise, low fat cream cheese or sour cream.
- **Avoid raw vegetables and raw fruits** except bananas.
- Instead of three large meals, try **small frequent meals and snacks** to help you better absorb nutrients from the foods you are eating.
- Frequent fluids are very important to help you replace the fluids you lose with each watery bowel movement, and help you stay well hydrated. Aim for **6-8 cups of fluid daily**.
- **Fluid suggestions** include water, pulp-free juice, sport drinks, decaffeinated coffee or teas, soda, popsicles, fruit ice, or gelatin.
- **Avoid caffeine and chocolate** until your symptoms resolve.

| Food Group | Recommended Foods | Foods to Avoid |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Breads and Cereals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, wheat, potato, or seedless rye breads • Cereals made with rice, oats or corn (Farina®, cream of rice, oatmeal, corn flakes, puffed rice, Cheerios®) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole wheat breads • Bread with seeds, dried fruits, or nuts • Whole wheat or bran cereals or cereals with seeds, dried fruits, or nuts |
| Other Grains | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White rice, pasta, barley • Potato without skin • Saltine or graham crackers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain rice, pasta, crackers, or baked goods • Potato skins • Popcorn |

| Food Group | Recommended Foods | Foods to Avoid |
|---|--|---|
| Vegetables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked vegetables (beets, carrots, mushrooms, green or yellow beans) • Cooked tomato products without seeds or skins | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All raw vegetables • Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, or Brussel sprouts) • Peas, corn, asparagus, spinach • Dried peas and beans |
| Fruits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooked or canned fruits without seeds or skins • Ripe banana • Melon without seeds • Fruit juice without pulp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raw fruits (except ripe banana or melons without seeds) • Berries • Citrus fruits • Dried fruits • Fruit juice with pulp |
| Meats, Fish, Eggs, Nuts, and Cheeses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean cuts of beef or pork • Poultry without skin • Fish • Egg or egg substitute • Low fat cheese (less than 5 grams fat per ounce. • Cottage cheese | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatty meats (brisket, chuck roast, 80-85% ground beef, sausage, bacon, luncheon meats) • Poultry with skin • Fried meats or fish • High-fat cheeses (more than 5 grams fat per ounce) • Peanut butter or nuts • Dry beans, peas, lentils |
| Milk ,Yogurt, and other dairy products | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1% or skim milk • Low-fat or fat-free yogurt – no seeds, skins, or dried fruit • Heavy cream, half and half | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole or 2% milk • Yogurt with seeds, dried fruit, or fruit skins |

If you have any questions, please call the Dietitian Office, at Roswell Park at **716- 845-2398**.