MANAGING CHEMOTHERAPY SIDE EFFECTS:
DIARRHEA

WHAT IS DIARRHEA?
• A change in your bowel habits-usually more frequent, softer or liquid stools. Because food passes more quickly through the bowel, the body absorbs less minerals, vitamins and water. Diarrhea can cause dehydration.

CAUSES:
• Some chemotherapy drugs.
• Radiation therapy if given to the abdominal and pelvic areas.
• Surgery that involves removing parts of the stomach or intestine.
• Some antibiotics, antacids, nutritional supplements.
• Infection, food sensitivities, emotional upset.

WHAT CAN I DO?
• Eat small, more frequent meals.
• Drink 8-12 glasses of fluid a day.
• Avoid foods and liquids that may stimulate the bowel (whole grains, fresh fruits, prunes, raisins, seeds, nuts).
• Avoid gas producing food drinks (carbonated drinks, broccoli, cabbage, highly spiced foods, beans).
• Eat foods low in residue and high in protein and carbohydrates (rice, cooked cereals, bananas, applesauce, macaroni, peanut butter).
• Eat plenty of foods and liquids that contain sodium and potassium (minerals that are usually lost with diarrhea). Eat bananas, fish, potatoes. Drink apple juice, grape juice, bouillon, peach nectar, Pedialyte®.
• Avoid milk and milk products. Restart slowly when diarrhea subsides.
• Restrict solid food intake for prolonged or severe diarrhea.
• Rest if feeling weak.
• Take, as prescribed by your doctor or nurse, anti-diarrheal medication.
• Apply heat to your abdomen for discomfort and cramping.
• Cleanse and dry anal area gently after every stool.
• Protect skin in anal area with ointment such as Desitin® or A&D.
• A local anesthetic such as Tucks® may improve comfort.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR OR NURSE?
• Diarrhea that lasts more than 2 days.
• Bloody Diarrhea