Guidelines for managing diarrhoea

Diarrhoea may happen as a side effect of your treatment or due to illness. Whilst you are having diarrhoea it may be helpful to slightly alter what you eat. This is only necessary whilst you have diarrhoea. The following tips may be helpful:

• Speak to your doctor, therapy radiographers or nurse practitioner about medication that will help to reduce your diarrhoea and take this as advised.

• Drink plenty of fluids to replace the water lost in diarrhoea. Milky drinks or fruit juices without bits will give you more nutrition than water.

• Chew all your food well.

• Choose breakfast cereals based on rice or corn, such as rice krispies or cornflakes in preference to cereals that contain oats or bran.

• Peel, core and deseed fresh fruit, or choose canned fruit such as pears, peaches, apricots or fruit cocktail. You could also try stewed and sieved fruit such as smooth apple puree with custard, ice cream or crème fraiche.

• Cook vegetables such as peeled carrots, swede, potatoes, cauliflower or broccoli florets until soft.

• It is better to choose fruit and vegetables that do not have a shell or a ‘stringy’ texture. For example peas, sweetcorn or celery may cause a problem for you.
• Light, easily digested foods such as chicken, fish, eggs and milk are a good source of protein and are better than nuts or pulses such as lentils or baked beans.

• Foods made with white flour such as white bread, pasta, pastry, plain biscuits or cakes are preferable to those made with wholemeal flour.

• It is better to choose mild dishes rather than spicy foods such as curry or chilli con carne.

• If you notice that a particular food makes your diarrhoea worse, then choose an alternative that does not cause a problem.

It is important to gradually go back onto your normal diet when the diarrhoea lessens.

If you have any questions regarding the impact of the diarrhoea on your diet or weight then please speak to the therapy radiographer or radiotherapy nurse practitioner - when you attend for treatment or call on 01865 235473 during normal working hours. They can refer to a dietician. Or contact the Oxford triage assessment team on 01865 572192 out of hours.

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk