

Treatment of Diarrhea using High-Dose Loperamide

Special Instructions to Help Control Diarrhea Caused by Cancer Treatment

You may need extra help to control diarrhea while taking some medicines used to treat cancer. Diarrhea caused by cancer treatments can be very serious, and may not go away on its own. It is important to call your doctor if you have diarrhea that lasts for more than 24 hours or if you have 4 or more loose stools in 24 hours.

A drug called Loperamide may help with controlling the diarrhea. It is available over the counter at any local pharmacy. This medicine also goes by a brand name – Imodium AD.

It is important to drink 6 to 8 glasses of clear, mild liquids (water, clear broths, sports drinks) every day to prevent dehydration. Drinking fluids will not cause more diarrhea.

Instructions on How to Take Loperamide

If your doctor tells you to take high-dose Loperamide to control diarrhea, follow the directions below when taking the medicine. These directions are different from the medicine label.

- **First dose:** Take 2 caplets (4 mg) of Loperamide with the first loose stool or moderate increase in colostomy output.
- **During the day:** Take 1 caplet (2 mg) every 2 hours.
- **During the night:** Take 2 caplets (4 mg) at bedtime. Then take 2 caplets every 4 hours until morning.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- **Stop** taking Loperamide if you do not have a bowel movement for 8 hours.
- After that 8 hour period:
 - ▶ If bowel movements are semi-solid to solid, do not take any more Loperamide.
 - ▶ If bowel movements become watery again or if diarrhea increases, start taking Loperamide once more.

Call the doctor's office if:

- Your diarrhea does not decrease or if it gets worse.
- You have symptoms such as dry mouth, dark colored urine, decrease in urine output, weight loss, feeling weak or lightheaded. These could be signs of dehydration.
- You have a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher.
- You have bad stomach pain or cramps.
- You have bloody or black stool.
- You need to take more than 12 caplets (24 mg) in 24 hours.
- You still have loose stools after 24 hours on the medicine.
- You have 4 or more loose stools in 24 hours.
- You have an ostomy and output is severely increased.

When you call the doctor's office, be ready to give them your local pharmacy phone number. The doctor may need to order another medicine for you.