Diarrhea

Diarrhea occurs when stools are pushed through the intestines before the water in them can be absorbed into the body. This causes more frequent, looser stools, sometimes with abdominal cramping. There are many causes of diarrhea, the most common of which includes infections from viruses, bacteria, or parasites. Certain medications, such as antibiotics and laxatives, can also cause diarrhea.

Home care

- Drink small, frequent sips of water or oral rehydration solution
- Avoid dehydration
- Avoid eating until you feel better and the frequency of the stools has decreased. Then, begin with mild foods such as toast, dry crackers, rice and applesauce
- Use anti-diarrheal drugs only if there are no other signs of illness, such as fever, chills or bloody stools

Seek medical attention if:

- You have severe diarrhea (large stools every hour, or more than 10 per day)
- Your diarrhea lasts longer than 1-2 weeks
- Your stools are bloody or black
- You have diarrhea with a fever
- You develop severe abdominal pain or signs of dehydration
- You have abdominal pain with fever

Prevention

- Wash hands thoroughly & often to decrease the spread of organisms that may lead to diarrhea
- Avoid emotional stress & anxiety, which may increase loose stools
- Avoid artificial sweeteners, such as sorbitol, or fat substitutes, such as olestra.