Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by many conditions. The most common cause is a virus.

Other causes include:

- Food poisoning.
- Bacterial infection.
- Reactions to medicine (especially antibiotics and antacids).

Most of the time diarrhea improves after 2-3 days of rest and oral fluid replacement.

Drink enough clear fluids (water, sodas, Gatorade) to prevent dehydration. Adults must drink at least 2-3 quarts daily. Solid foods and dairy products should be avoided until you improve. Then begin with bland foods such as bananas, rice, applesauce, dry toast, crackers or other starches. Avoid spicy or fatty foods, caffeine and alcohol for several days.

Medicine to control cramping and diarrhea may be helpful. If you have a fever or blood in the stool, avoid these medicines. They may prolong your illness. Antibiotics can speed recovery from diarrhea due to some bacterial infections, but may cause complications.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your diarrhea does not get better in 3 days.
- You have fever.
- You have blood in the stool.
- You develop vomiting.
- You become more dehydrated.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 06/30/2008
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.