

Health Awareness

Resolving The Myths And Facts Of Diarrhea

(NAPSA)—It's one of the most uncomfortable issues to talk about but, unfortunately, diarrhea is also one of the most commonly reported illnesses in the United States. Diarrhea falls second only to respiratory infections, with the average adult suffering four bouts of acute diarrhea per year. When it comes to treating diarrhea, there are many different opinions. But as it turns out, all you need to know are the facts.

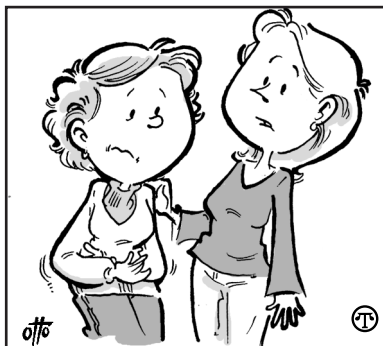
Here are some of the questions you may be hesitant to ask and the answers you should know:

Q. I've heard that there are many causes of diarrhea. What are some I should know about?

A. There are many things that can trigger diarrhea. Some of the more common causes include viral infections, like those due to rotavirus or norovirus (aka Norwalk virus), bacterial infections from contaminated food or water, lactose and gluten intolerance, and certain medications such as various blood pressure treatments and the magnesium found in some antacids. Caffeine or alcohol consumed in excess, which can stimulate the intestines, can also cause diarrhea. Lastly, some women may have diarrhea before their menstrual cycle due to hormonal changes.

Q. Is it true that it's best to let diarrhea run its course?

A. That's a common myth. Many people might say that diarrhea is a sign of a "bug" in the sys-



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tem that needs to run its course. Although one of the most common causes of diarrhea is a virus, diarrhea is not always an immune response to get rid of an infection—it can be a result of a disruption to your digestive system. To date, there is no data supporting the idea that treating diarrhea will prolong an illness.

Q. I have diarrhea. What should I do now?

A. If you have diarrhea, be sure to avoid foods or beverages that may make your symptoms worse. Dairy products, like ice cream or cheese, greasy foods, citrus fruits and sugary treats are all examples of foods to avoid when you have diarrhea. Diarrhea can also lead to dehydration, so be sure to reduce your risk by drinking plenty of clear liquids.

You may also want to consider an over-the-counter medication like IMODIUM®A-D or IMODIUM® Multi-Symptom Relief. Products such as these can be an effective way to manage diarrhea when used as directed. Not only is IMODIUM® Multi-Symptom Relief the only anti-diarrheal brand that also relieves the symptoms of gas, cramps, bloating and pressure, but research also shows that it works 33 percent faster than the fastest prescription anti-diarrheal medicine (loperamide HCl) to relieve diarrhea.

For additional information, please visit www.imodium.com.

Q. Should I be concerned if I have frequent bouts of diarrhea?

A. If you experience diarrhea that persists for more than two days, you should talk with your doctor. Frequent diarrhea may also be a sign of a food intolerance or allergy to milk or wheat products, which are common culprits. Talking with your doctor about your symptoms will help him or her determine the correct diagnosis and prescribe an appropriate treatment.

Q. What can I do to help avoid diarrhea in the future?

A. While there's no one preventative measure that can be taken to avoid future bouts of diarrhea, there are certain precautions you can take. For example, be sure to wash your hands to avoid spreading germs. You can also make sure the food you consume, such as meat and poultry, is cooked to the proper temperature.