

Diarrhea often goes away on its own. But if your diarrhea lasts longer than two days, you should get medical treatment from the board-certified gastroenterologists at Pioneer GI Clinic. They have extensive experience getting to the root cause of your diarrhea and providing treatment that restores normal bowel movements and prevents potential complications. If you have questions about diarrhea or need to schedule an appointment, call the office in Anchorage, Alaska.

## **What is diarrhea?**

Everyone recognizes diarrhea, but they may not know that doctors define diarrhea as having loose, watery stools three or more times a day. Acute diarrhea, the most common type, lasts one or two days and improves on its own.

Persistent diarrhea lasts 2-4 weeks. You have chronic diarrhea if the problem lasts longer than four weeks. In both cases, you may have continuous diarrhea, or it could come and go.

You should seek help at Pioneer GI Clinic if your diarrhea lasts longer than two days, or you have abdominal pain, bloody or black stools, or a fever.

Without prompt treatment, diarrhea can quickly cause dehydration because you lose an excessive amount of fluids.

## **What causes diarrhea?**

Diarrhea has many possible causes, including:

- Magnesium supplements
- Antibiotics and other medications
- Bacterial or viral infections
- Parasitic infections
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis
- Celiac disease
- Stomach flu (viral gastroenteritis)
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO)
- Food intolerances and allergies
- Metabolic conditions like thyroid disorders

Sugar substitutes containing sorbitol, mannitol, and xylitol may also cause diarrhea.

## What symptoms accompany diarrhea?

When you have diarrhea, there's a good chance of having other symptoms as well. Many people experience abdominal pain, urgent or uncontrollable bowel movements, and nausea or vomiting. If an infection causes your diarrhea, you may have a fever, bloody stools, or dizziness.

It's also important to stay alert for signs of dehydration. Dehydration upsets your body's electrolyte levels. Since your heart, nerves, and muscles need electrolytes to function, dehydration can result in serious complications.

The signs of dehydration include:

- Extreme thirst
- Urinating less than usual
- Dark-colored urine
- Dry mouth
- Fatigue
- Sunken eyes or cheeks
- Light-headedness

Also, dehydrated skin might not snap back to normal right away if you pinch and release it.

## How is diarrhea treated?

If you don't have bloody stools or a fever, you can drink fluids and use over-the-counter diarrhea medicines. But when your diarrhea doesn't improve, the team at Pioneer GI Clinic completes a thorough exam, including diagnostic testing when needed to diagnose the root cause.

In most cases, your provider prescribes the most appropriate medication. Some medications directly target your diarrhea, while others treat the condition causing the problem. For example, you may need antibiotics or antiparasitic medicines to eliminate an infection.

Don't wait to get help for diarrhea.