

Diarrhea: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

QUICK REVIEW

Severe bloody diarrhea, diarrhea in a child under six years of age, or diarrhea that lasts more than three days should not be taken lightly; its cause must be determined and treated appropriately.

The therapy of any chronic diarrhea requires identification of the underlying cause and then directing therapy designed to restore normal bowel function.

Replace lost water and electrolytes by drinking herbal teas, vegetable broths, fruit juices, or electrolyte-replacement drinks.

Avoid dairy products (with the possible exception of live-cultured yogurt) while experiencing diarrhea.

Carob powder is particularly helpful in treating diarrhea in young children.

Supplementation with *Lactobacillus acidophilus* is crucial in the treatment of diarrhea of any kind, but particularly in antibiotic-associated diarrhea. Chronic diarrhea is one of the most common symptoms of food allergy. It has been estimated that seventy to ninety percent of Asian, Black, Native American, and Mediterranean adults lack the enzyme required to digest milk sugar (lactose).

- Diarrheal diseases caused by parasites still constitute the single greatest worldwide cause of illness and death. Popular natural treatments of parasitic infections include high dosages of pancreatic enzymes and berberine-containing plants, such as goldenseal. Berberine has shown significant success in the treatment of acute diarrhea in several clinical studies.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

Since most acute cases of diarrhea are self-limiting, the general recommendations given are often all that is needed. If any of the following apply, a physician should be consulted:

- Diarrhea in a child under six years of age
- Severe or bloody diarrhea
- Diarrhea that lasts more than three days
- Significant signs of dehydration (sunken eyes, severe dry mouth, strong body odor, etc.)

After identification of the cause of chronic diarrhea, appropriate treatment can be determined with the help of a physician.

General Support

There are several measures that can be used as general support during any case of diarrhea:

- Don't eat solid foods

- Replace water and electrolytes • Avoid dairy products
- Use carob or pectin (alone or in combination with kaolin)