

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is a "sick" or "queasy" feeling in your stomach. Vomiting or "throwing up" often goes along with nausea. Several different things can cause nausea. While nausea with cancer therapy was common years ago, there are now many medications available to manage this side effect. If you experience nausea and/or vomiting, talk to your oncology team about medications to manage this side effect. Here are some tips and strategies to help prevent and/or manage nausea and vomiting:

What causes nausea and vomiting?

- Radiation therapy to certain areas of the body, including the brain, abdomen and head and neck, can cause nausea.
- Some chemotherapy and biotherapy agents.
- Anxiety particularly about upcoming treatments or because of negative prior experiences with cancer therapy.
- Constipation and diarrhea can also cause you to feel nauseous.

What can I do to prevent/ better manage nausea?

- Drink 6-8 glasses of uncaffeinated fluid per day, such as broth, Gatorade®, Jello® (gelatin dessert), fruit juices, water ices, popsicles, soda and gingerale.
- Eat dry, bland foods, such as crackers, toast, cereals, pretzels and ginger cookies.
- Eat cold foods such as cereals, salads, cold cuts and desserts. The smell of hot foods can exacerbate nausea.
- Eat 6 small meals throughout the day, instead of 3 large meals.
- Chew food well.
- Try peppermint or ginger tea, flat soda or gingerale.
- Try to have others prepare your meals.
- Rinse your mouth out frequently and before eating to avoid an unpleasant sour taste.
- Suck on mints, hard candy, or ginger candy.
- Loosen clothes, get fresh air and sit upright for 1-2 hours after eating.
- Eat in cool rooms with fresh air.
- Breathe through your mouth slowly during times of severe nausea until the feeling passes.
- Take part in activities such as TV, radio, games, music to take your mind off the feeling of nausea.
- Use relaxation techniques and guided visual imagery.
- Discuss hypnosis and acupuncture with your doctor or nurse.

What things should I avoid?

- Fatty, fried, greasy or spicy foods.
- Citrus fruits, juices and tomatoes.
- Unpleasant odors, sights and sounds that may aggravate nausea.
- Combining hot and cold foods at the same meal.
- Your favorite foods during bouts of nausea and vomiting, so you will not associate them with feelings of nausea later on.
- Drinking liquids during meals, which can fill you up and not allow you to get in needed

calories.

- Excessive activity and sudden movements

How are nausea and vomiting treated?

Treatment of nausea and vomiting will depend on its cause. Your doctor may recommend:

- Anti-nausea medications to be taken before and after a treatment.
- If nausea occurs in the days/ weeks following treatment, it may be helpful to take an anti-nausea medication about 30 minutes before meals.
- Anti-anxiety medications can be taken to prevent or treat nausea and vomiting.
- If you become dehydrated from nausea and vomiting, your doctor may give you fluid by IV (intravenous).

Do not take any medications unless instructed by your doctor or nurse.

When should I call the doctor or nurse?

If you have:

- Bloody or coffee-ground appearing vomit
- Black stools
- Temperature over 100.5°
- Vomited two or more times in a day
- Abdominal pain, cramping or swelling
- Difficulty eating
- Difficulty with drinking 6-8 glasses of fluid a day
- Light-headedness, dizziness or weakness
- Dark urine
- No relief after taking anti-nausea medications prescribed by your doctor

If you have any questions about nausea and vomiting, or need additional information, ask your doctor or nurse. Remember it is always better to call if you have any questions and let your doctor or nurse know your symptoms so they can prevent complications from arising.