



Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is a "sick" or "queasy" feeling in your stomach. Vomiting or "throwing up" often goes along with nausea. Many things can cause nausea. While nausea with cancer therapy was common years ago, there are now many medications that can treat this side effect. If you have nausea and/or vomiting, talk to your oncology team about medications to manage this side effect.

What causes nausea and vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting can be caused by treatments for cancer, cancer itself, and by the feelings and emotions related to cancer treatment. Radiation therapy to certain areas of the body, including the brain, abdomen and head and neck, can cause nausea. Some medications used to treat cancer can cause nausea and vomiting. Anxiety related to cancer and its treatments can lead to nausea. Changes to your normal bowel functions such as constipation and diarrhea can also cause you to feel nauseous.

What can I do to prevent/better manage nausea?

There are a number of ways that you can prevent and treat nausea and vomiting.

- Drink 6-8 glasses of uncaffeinated fluid per day, such as broth, Gatorade®, Jello® (gelatin dessert), fruit juices, water ices, popsicles, soda and ginger ale.
- 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 make nausea worse.
- Eat 6 small meals throughout the day, instead of 3 large meals.
- Chew food well.
- Try peppermint or ginger tea, flat soda or ginger ale.
- Try to have others prepare your meals.
- Rinse your mouth out often 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 make nausea worse.
- 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 provider may suggest:

- Anti-nausea medications to be taken before and after 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 or consistently on a scheduled basis.
- Anti-anxiety medications can be taken to prevent or treat nausea and vomiting.
- If you become dehydrated from nausea and vomiting, your provider may give you fluid by IV (intravenous).

Do not take any medications unless you have spoken to your provider about it.

When should I call my care team?

If you have:

- Vomit that looks bloody or like coffee grounds.
- Black stools.
- Temperature over 100.4°F (38°C).
- Vomited two or more times in a day.
- Belly pain, cramping or swelling.
- Trouble eating.
- Trouble 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 provider.

If you have any questions about nausea and vomiting or need more information, ask your care team. If you are experiencing nausea and vomiting and need help managing this side effect you should call your provider.

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