

Nausea and Vomiting with Cancer Treatment

Nausea is a sick, uncomfortable feeling in your stomach that often comes before vomiting. Nausea and vomiting are possible side effects of cancer treatments. Some people are more affected by nausea and vomiting than others.

Chemotherapy medicines can cause nausea and vomiting. Medicines to prevent nausea are often given with chemotherapy. These medicines can be given before treatment or during treatment. Your doctor will tell you when you should take these medicines. Radiation therapy to the chest, stomach or back may also cause nausea and vomiting. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have problems.

Nausea and vomiting may also occur from other medical problems.

What to do

It is best to treat nausea early. This can help prevent problems caused by prolonged nausea or too much water loss called dehydration. Signs of dehydration include:

- Dry mouth
- Cracked lips
- Dizziness
- Dry eyes
- Less urine output
- Very dry skin

Call your doctor or nurse if you are too nauseated to drink liquids or if you have more than two episodes of vomiting in 24 hours. Do not wait.

Eating and drinking tips

During this time, you may eat and drink anything that you like. You may find these tips helpful:

- Eat only a light meal before chemotherapy.
- Eat small meals every few hours instead of 3 bigger meals each day.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of liquids each day.
- Limit drinking liquids with caffeine such as soft drinks, coffee and tea.
- Use popsicles, mints, tart hard candies, citrus flavored drinks or ginger ale. They may help get rid of the bad taste in your mouth after chemotherapy.
- Eat bland foods such as saltine crackers, toast, skim milk, sherbet, fruit, baked potatoes or plain vegetables.
- Avoid spicy, fatty, greasy or fried foods.
- Let someone else cook to avoid smelling strong odors.

- Avoid alcohol while taking medicine for nausea and vomiting.
- Avoid lying down right after eating. Sit up or rest with your head raised on pillows.

Medicines to prevent nausea and vomiting

Medicines can help prevent nausea and vomiting. Take all medicines as ordered by your doctor.

- Make sure you know if your medicine should be taken with or without food.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if the medicine is not helping you or if you cannot keep the pills down. There are other medicines that may work better.
- You may feel weak, dizzy or sleepy while taking medicine for nausea and vomiting.

Other ways to help

- Slow, deep breathing through your mouth or swallowing may help nausea pass.
- Avoid unpleasant sights, sounds and smells that may trigger nausea.
- Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth after each meal and before meals if you have a bad taste in your mouth.
- Open a window to get fresh air.
- Avoid sudden movements that may make you dizzy.
- Relax with music or activities you enjoy.
- Sit up or turn on your side when vomiting. This prevents fluid from getting into your lungs.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any question or concerns.