

Nausea and Vomiting

Effects of Cancer and Treatment: Nausea and Vomiting

Dealing with the effects of cancer and treatment has improved over the years. As a result, fewer people have nausea (the feeling of wanting to throw-up) and/or vomiting (throwing-up) during treatment and recovery.

Cancers and treatments, like chemotherapy or radiation, may cause nausea and vomiting. Your cancer care team will tell you if there is a possibility of this happening. If nausea and /or vomiting does happen there are ways to deal with it including taking anti-nausea drugs before and after treatment.

- Nausea and vomiting may be caused by:
- the cancer itself,
- cancer treatment like chemotherapy or radiation,
- drugs, like pain killers, or
- being constipated (not being able to move your bowels).

What should I do if I have nausea or vomiting after my treatment?

- Talk with your doctor or nurse if you are vomiting after taking any of your medicines or having treatments.
- Keep track of when you have nausea and /or vomiting. What were you doing at the time? What were you eating or drinking? What did the vomit look like?

Your doctor may order tests to find the cause of your nausea and/or vomiting. Your doctor may also prescribe a drug to decrease or stop your nausea and/or vomiting. This drug is an anti-emetic (an-te-e-met-ic). There are different causes of nausea and/or vomiting. It may take time for the health care team to find the right way to deal with your nausea and/or vomiting.

**What are your questions? Please ask.
We are here to help you.**

How can I manage nausea and vomiting?

- After eating, relax in an upright position, like sitting or standing, but not lying down.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about medicines to control your nausea or vomiting.
- If your doctor prescribes medicine for you, use it as directed.
- Take your anti-emetics 30 minutes before meals, if medicines are scheduled around mealtime.
- Wear clothes that are loose around your stomach.
- Eat slowly.
- Eat lighter meals on treatment days.
- Try frequent small meals and snacks rather than large meals.
- Try a bland diet (avoid sweet, spicy, or salty foods) or foods that do not have a strong smell and are low- fat. Fatty, sweet, salty, or spicy foods are more likely to cause problems.
- Drink clear fluids with meals and between meals. Fluids like water, apple juice, flat ginger ale and clear broths are easier on your stomach. Avoid coffee, alcohol and “bubbly” drinks. Resource® fruit beverage is an alternative to commercial supplements that are milk based.
- If the smell of cooking or preparing foods makes you feel sick, have someone else prepare the meal.
- You may be able to eat cold foods, like sandwiches, cheese, fruit, yogurt and puddings, better than hot foods. Crackers, rice, white bread or digestive cookies are also good choices.
- If you vomit, clean your mouth well. The booklet “Mouth Care During Cancer Treatment” gives you good tips on mouth care. Depending on your treatment, the booklet “Cytotoxic Precautions at Home” may also be useful.
- Stress, worrying and being anxious can at times make nausea or vomiting worse. When you feel worried, anxious or upset try taking a deep breath and blow out slowly. Do this several times.

A dietitian may provide addition information on managing your nausea and vomiting.

Questions to ask your health care team

- Will the treatment upset my stomach?
- Should I take medicine to deal with nausea and vomiting?
- Whom should I talk to if I have nausea and/or vomiting? Should I report it right away, or wait until my next appointment?
- What should I do if I vomit my treatment medicine?
- Can I meet with a dietitian or another member of the health team to discuss ways to deal with my nausea and vomiting?
- Is it necessary to take special care when cleaning up vomit?

Looking for more information on this topic?

You can contact the Canadian Cancer Society at www.cancer.ca or call the Cancer Information Service of the Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333. You can also contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information. For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to

<http://publiclibraries.ns.ca>.

For more information visit the Nova Scotia Cancer Care Program website at www.nscancercare.ca.

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