

# Nausea and Vomiting Due to Chemotherapy

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You may be worried about nausea and vomiting. Nausea and vomiting can be caused by chemotherapy drugs irritating:

- Areas of the brain that control nausea.
- The cells that line the digestive tract (mouth, throat, stomach, and intestine).

Nausea and vomiting can also be caused by:

- Stress.
- Just the thought of having chemotherapy.

It is important to control nausea because it can keep you from eating and drinking. When you don't eat or drink enough, you deprive your body of the nutrients it needs. Nutrients give you energy and help you heal.

There are medicines that can help prevent or control nausea. If nausea and vomiting are a problem for you, your doctor will give you some medicine. You may get these before, at the time of, or after your chemotherapy. You will also get a prescription for medicine to take home with you. These medicines work differently for different people. If the medicine you are taking does not work, let your doctor or nurse know. You may need to try a different medicine or take more than one type to feel better. Your doctor and nurse will try to find the medicine that works best for you. Don't give up.

## Ways to help you control nausea and vomiting:

- Take your medicine as directed by your doctor or nurse. You may have been told to take it on a regular schedule even if you are not nauseous. You may have been told to take it as soon as you feel nauseous. In either case, take it on time and DO NOT wait.
- Drink at least eight to ten 8-ounce glasses of liquids a day. Drink slowly and in small amounts at least an hour before or after mealtime. Try cool, clear, unsweetened fruit juices or light colored sodas that have lost their fizz. Choose drinks that do not have caffeine, which can lead to dehydration.
- Eat small frequent meals.
- Avoid eating foods that give off an odor and that are:
  - Fried.
  - Greasy.
  - Creamy.
  - Rich.
  - Spicy.
- Eat your meals slowly and at room temperature or cold. This will help if you are bothered by strong smells. Odors from cooking or hot meals can cause nausea.
- Chew your food well and sit upright for 2 hours after eating. This will help with digestion.

- To help prevent dry heaves or nausea in the morning, try eating dry foods before getting up. You can try crackers, cereal or toast.
- Suck on hard candy such as mints or tart candies.
- Eat a light meal before treatment.
- Be sure to brush your teeth and keep your mouth clean. Rinse out your mouth after vomiting.
- Practice relaxation methods such as:
  - Listening to soft music.
  - Deep breathing techniques.
  - Yoga.
  - Meditation.
  - Applying a damp washcloth to your forehead or the back of your neck.
- Ask for a referral to the Integrative Medicine Center. There you can learn more about:
  - Methods to help you relax.
  - Other ways to help control nausea and vomiting.
- Ask your doctor or nurse to schedule an appointment for you with a dietitian.

**Call Your Doctor or Nurse if You:**

- Vomit over a 24-hour period.
- Take your medicine and still feel nauseous.
- Have any questions or concerns.