

Nausea and Vomiting Information for Patients

What is Nausea? (nor'ze'a)

Nausea is a sick or queasy feeling. It can occur with or without vomiting. It may be constant or it may come and go.

Nausea may be caused by a cancer or other illnesses such as a kidney disease. Sometimes the feeling of nausea is from medical treatments such as chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy or sometime from other medications.

If you are feeling nauseated during or following chemotherapy or radiation treatment please refer to the information sheets that you have been given by the service that is providing your treatment.

Nausea is not pleasant, but it is common, and it can affect everyone differently. Nausea can make it difficult for you to do things you enjoy, like spending time with your family and friends.

Anxiety may make nausea and vomiting worse, so the best thing to do is ask your nurse or doctor for help.

What is Vomiting?

Vomiting is the emptying of the stomach contents through the mouth. It is sometimes referred to as 'throwing up'.

If you are taking medications and you vomit within 1 hour of taking medication, you may take another pill.

If you are vomiting more than 1-2 times a day and you can't keep anything down for more than 24 hours and you are feeling weak, call your doctor or nurse.

Medications

There are a number of anti-nausea medicines, depending on the cause of the nausea.

Some medications must be taken 20-30 minutes before meals, e.g. metoclopramide (Maxolon) or domperidone to allow them to 'take effect' by the time you are due to eat.

It is important to take your medicine as prescribed by your doctor. **Always follow the instructions on the bottle.**

Check with your nurse or doctor if your anti-nausea medications do not appear to be working but don't stop taking them without talking to a nurse or doctor. The same applies if you no longer feel nauseated as this may be because they are working well.

Dehydration (lack of fluid in the body)

This is a risk for people who are vomiting a lot. Try to sip water or any fluid you like.

If you have severe vomiting ask your nurse or doctor if you need 'Gastrolyte' or 'Enerlyte' to replace the salts you lose in the vomit. In the meantime a sports drink like 'PowerAde', salty soup or nibbling on salted crackers may help.

Once the vomiting starts to improve, you can slowly begin eating again. If you find you have a poor appetite and don't know what to eat, ask for the *Poor Appetite* information sheet.

Other ideas to help with nausea and/or vomiting

- Keep your mouth fresh and clean by rinsing your mouth after meals with a mouthwash (For more information and the 'Salt and Baking Soda Mouthwash' recipe see the *Mouth and Swallowing Problems* information sheet)
- Snack on small meals
- Sip cool fluids throughout the day, rather than drinking large amounts
- Ginger ale, dilute fruit juice, ice blocks are often well tolerated. Try a straw
- Please ask for the *Nourishing Drinks* leaflet for more ideas.
- Some people find ginger helpful - try it in drinks, biscuits, cooking or tablet form
- Stay away from smells that make you feel sick
- Try to get fresh air when you can
- Keep a basin handy, in case you vomit
- Make sure you don't get constipated because this can worsen nausea
- Some people find acupuncture wristbands from the chemist are helpful

This is a general guide only, not a complete resource on the subject. It has been prepared for patients and families who are receiving palliative care.

If you have further questions, ask your health care professional.