

Hints to Help with Nausea and Vomiting

One of the most important goals of Moffitt Cancer Center is to provide you with the highest quality of care through education, research and service. The following information has been developed to help you manage nausea and vomiting. Your doctor, nurse or dietitian will review this information with you and answer any questions you may have.

What causes nausea and vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting can be caused by certain medications, motion, anxiety, dehydration, certain odors, radiation, chemotherapy or the cancer itself. Those people who have nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy or radiation will be glad to know that there are a variety of ways to relieve these side effects through diet, medicines and relaxation methods.

What can help you eat while nauseated?

- Take your prescribed anti-nausea medicine 30 to 60 minutes before you eat.
- If you have nausea and vomiting after your chemotherapy treatment, try taking your anti-nausea medicine the night before your treatment and keep taking it through the first 48 hours after treatment. Do this even if you do not feel nauseated.
- Try eating dry, salty foods like plain toast or crackers.
- Use a clear liquid diet to reduce the feeling of nausea. Liquids such as apple juice, cranberry juice, lemonade, fruitades, broth, Gatorade[®], ginger ale, 7-Up[®], popsicles, gelatin, tea, or cola are usually well tolerated. Sip liquids slowly. If cold liquids or carbonation bothers you, drink at room temperature or when soda is flat (having no fizz).
- Eat smaller portions of food that are low in fat since they are easiest to digest and move through the stomach faster. If you are eating smaller portions, be sure to eat more often to keep up with your calorie and protein needs.
- Avoid foods that are fried, fatty, or very spicy.
- Do not eat your favorite foods at times when you are likely to be nauseated or vomit. Patients often become “turned off” by some of their favorite foods if they eat them during periods of nausea and vomiting, such as right after chemotherapy.
- Do not lie flat for at least two hours after eating. However, it may be helpful to rest after eating. If you do, sit upright. When reclining, make sure your head is at least four inches higher than your feet. You may want to put four-inch blocks under the head of your bed.
- Sometimes loose clothing or fresh air can help. Take slow deep breaths and exhale slowly. Repeat two more times.
- Try sour foods such as lemons, sour pickles, sour hard candy, or lemon sherbet to relieve the feeling of nausea. Rinsing your mouth with a mixture of lemon juice and water may also be helpful.

Helpful tips if the smell of food makes you nauseated:

- Let someone else do the cooking. Sit in another room or take a walk while the food is being cooked.
- Do not prepare fried foods or strong smelling foods when nauseated. Fried or greasy foods seem to be the worst offenders along with cabbage, broccoli and egg products.
- Use prepared foods from the freezer that can be warmed at a low temperature, or have a meal that doesn't need to be cooked.
- Eat foods at room temperature or cooler. Examples of cold temperature foods are chef salads, sandwiches, Carnation[®] Instant Breakfast and yogurt with fruit.

Suggestions for increasing your diet after periods of vomiting:

- Start with liquids first.
 1. **If you are vomiting, do not try to eat.** Drink or sip cool liquids such as iced tea, water, tonic water, club soda, Sprite[®], sports drinks, etc. It is important to drink to replace lost fluids.
 2. Suck on popsicles, hard candies, suckers, candy sticks, or candy canes.
 3. As you feel better, try broth, Jell-O[®], juices, sherbet, or fruit ice.
- When liquids stay down, try dry toast, crackers, pretzels, hot cereal, or baked potatoes. If these foods do not cause problems, try milk on cereal, mild fruits and vegetables, custards and puddings.
- Gradually add foods, one at a time, to see which are the best tolerated.

Call your doctor if:

- You are unable to drink fluids.
- Your nausea lasts for more than 1 or 2 days, or it is not controlled by your anti-nausea medicines.
- You lose 2 or more pounds in 1 to 2 days.
- You have more than 3 episodes of vomiting in a 24 hour period.
- Your vomit looks like coffee grounds.
- You do not have the need to urinate as often as usual and your urine looks dark yellow.

Produced by the Patient Education Department 1/ 2012.