

Nausea and Vomiting

Side Effects – Symptoms & Solutions

Nausea and vomiting

Two of the most common side effects of chemotherapy are nausea and vomiting. Fortunately, they have become less common and severe with the development of new medications that prevent or lessen nausea or vomiting in most patients. Finding the best combination of drugs, however, takes time; so patients should inform their doctors and nurses about how much nausea and vomiting they are experiencing.

How do nausea and vomiting typically affect patients?

Nausea and vomiting most commonly start a few hours after chemotherapy and last only a short time. In some patients, nausea and vomiting can be severe and last a few days.

In about half of patients, nausea occurs even before chemotherapy begins, as they anticipate treatment. Physicians may start patients on medicines beforehand to limit these side effects.

What can I do for nausea and vomiting?

- Change the way you drink:
 - Drink at least an hour before or after meals – instead of during meals – if you can.
 - Drink often, but slowly and in small amounts.
 - Drink cool, unsweetened fruit juices (such as apple juice), or light-colored soft drinks (such as ginger ale) that have gone flat (lost their fizz).

- Change the way you eat:
 - Eat smaller meals, but eat more often.
 - Eat slowly and chew well.
 - Avoid foods that are sweet, fried, or fatty.
 - After meals, you can rest, but don't lie flat for at least 2 hours.
 - If you are sickened by the smell of food, try eating it at room temperature or colder.
 - Eat a light meal before treatment, but if you usually feel nausea during chemotherapy, avoid eating altogether for a few hours beforehand.
- Suck on ice cubes, mints or tart candy (do not eat tart candy if you have sores in your mouth or throat).
- Distract yourself: talk with family or friends, watch television, listen to music, or learn relaxation techniques.
- If you have nausea, breathe deeply and slowly.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing.
- If you are bothered by nausea in the morning, try eating dry foods like toast, cereal, or crackers before getting up (unless you have less saliva than normal, or mouth or throat sores).

The information contained herein is not comprehensive and is intended only as a guide.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you are very nauseated, have vomited for more than 1 day, or if you cannot keep liquids down.

Anti nausea medications and instructions from physician and nurse:
