

Managing nutritional concerns: Nausea and vomiting

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Cancer treatment may result in nausea and vomiting. There are different causes for nausea and vomiting, such as irritation of the GI tract, changes in the chemical receptors in the brain, and feelings of anxiety or nervousness related to treatment. Nausea is sometimes described as an unsettling or queasy feeling in the stomach and can be experienced with or without vomiting. Your physician may prescribe several medications called antiemetics to help prevent and manage nausea and

vomiting.¹

Tips For People Experiencing Nausea and Vomiting^{2,3}:

- Prevention and early management of nausea and vomiting are most effective. Do not wait until you are very uncomfortable to take your nausea medications
- Take your medications for nausea as instructed by your physician, nurse, or pharmacist
- Take antiemetics (medication to decrease vomiting) half an hour to an hour before meals
- Call your doctor or nurse if your medications are not reducing symptoms or you are continuing to throw up
- Try to keep track of the times you experience nausea. This may help your doctor or nurse better suggest how to manage your side effects
- Having an empty stomach may make nausea and vomiting worse so be sure to eat regular meals and snacks
- Eat small frequent meals (5-6 times a day) instead of 3 large meals
- Avoid greasy, spicy foods and food with strong odors
- Eat foods such as crackers, toast, and/or broth that may be easier on your stomach
- Drink fluids half an hour before or after meals as some people find consuming beverages with meals can make nausea worse
- Try ginger teas, ginger candies, ginger snaps/cookies, or ginger root in soups

Always communicate with your doctor or nurse about what you are experiencing. Contact your MD if you are still having nausea and vomiting even after taking your antiemetics, are unable to eat or drink or are losing weight.

References:

1. Nausea and Vomiting. Cancer.net. <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/side-effects/nausea-and-vomiting>. Accessed December 6, 2016.
2. Elliot, L. Symptom Management of Cancer Therapies in Lesser M, Ledesma N, Bergerson S, Trujillo E, eds. *Oncology Nutrition for Clinical Practice*. Oncology Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: 2013. pg 119.

3. American Institute for Cancer Research, Savor Health and LIVESTRONG. *Heal Well: A Cancer Nutrition Guide*. 2013.

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