

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is an uneasy feeling in the stomach that may lead to vomiting. It is a common side effect or symptom from different illnesses, medications and treatments. You may also feel nauseous if you are anxious or upset.

Ongoing nausea and vomiting can stop you from eating well. Eating well and maintaining your weight is important during and after treatment. A Dietitian can provide help to manage these symptoms and improve your food intake.

Ideas that may help when feeling nauseous:

- Take regular anti-nausea medication half an hour before meals or as prescribed by your Doctor.
- Do not skip meals. An empty stomach can make nausea worse.
- Eat small amounts, often and slowly. Try 6 to 8 smaller meals each day instead of three larger ones.
- Try 'cold' or room temperature foods, as these do not taste or smell as strong. E.g. sandwiches, salads, puddings such as creamed rice, custard, mousse, yoghurts, tinned fruit or jelly.
- Snack on dry biscuits, noodles, cereal, toast and crackers.
- Salty foods, such as clear soup and potato crisps may help.
- Drink cold clear fluids between meals such as cordial, lemonade, dry ginger ale or fruit juice. You could also try sucking on ice blocks.
- Try ginger containing foods, such as ginger beer, ale, tea or candied ginger.
- Try not to eat fatty, rich, spicy or very sweet foods if you find they make your nausea worse.
- There might be times of the day when you feel more like eating. Make the most of these times by eating well.

- If the smell of food cooking causes nausea, try and stay away from the kitchen. You could also use a microwave to help reduce odours.
- Ask family or friends to help with meals. Think about frozen meals or make food in bulk to freeze for times when you are unable to cook.
- Take care of your mouth with regular mouth rinses and washes. To reduce bad mouth tastes, try sucking on sugar free hard boiled lollies or peppermints.
- Try not to lie down or lean your chair back for at least one hour after eating.

Ideas that may help when you have been vomiting:

- If you have been vomiting, drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. Try drinks such as lemonade, ginger ale, clear juice, soda water or oral rehydration solutions such as Hydralyte™ or Gastrolyte™. You could also try sucking on ice blocks or icy poles
- Begin eating again slowly. Take sips of fluids. Then, increase to dry foods and a normal, balanced diet as tolerated

If nausea and vomiting persist, talk with your Doctor or Nurse about regular anti-nausea medication.

If you are unable to drink enough fluid see your Doctor. You may need rehydration.

Key References:

Walker MS, and Masino K. (1998) *Oncology Nutrition – Patient Education Materials*. American Dietetic Association. Chicago

Cancer Council NSW. (2013) *Food and Cancer: feeling sick and vomiting and Chemotherapy: Tips for Managing Side Effects*.

Cancer Council Victoria. (2013) *Digestive Problems During Cancer Treatment*. Cancer Council Victoria, VIC