

## What is cancer-related nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is an unpleasant feeling in the back of your throat and stomach. It can make you have more saliva (spit), clammy skin, a fast heart rate or feel light-headed. Vomiting is “throwing-up” the stomach contents through the mouth. Vomiting may or may not happen with nausea. When your stomach is empty you may have retching or “dry heaves”.

Nausea and vomiting are serious symptoms of cancer treatment that can have a big impact on your life. It is important to get help as soon as possible.

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## What can I do to manage my nausea and vomiting?

### 1. Take anti-nausea medications

It is easier to prevent nausea with medications than it is to treat it once it starts.

Tips to remember:

- Take your medication as your health care team prescribed
- No medication can control nausea and vomiting all of the time
- Most anti-nausea medications take 20-60 minutes before they start to work

What should I do if I vomit?

- Stop eating and drinking for 30-60 minutes. Then start eating and drinking slowly in this order:
  1. Clear liquids (water, ice chips, watered down juice, broth, gelatin, popsicles)
  2. Dry starchy food (crackers or dry toast)
  3. Protein rich foods (chicken, fish or eggs)
  4. Dairy foods (yogurt, milk or cheese)

To keep your mouth clean, rinse with a bland rise after vomiting. Homemade mouth rinse:

- Mix together: 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon baking soda, 4 cups of water

### 2. Learn to relax

Relaxation exercises can help you feel more in control of your mind and your body when you get nauseous.

These activities can help you relax:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Take a walk outside or breathe fresh air through an open window
- Watch TV or a movie

### 3. Drink & eat well

Tips on drinking:

- Sip small amounts of liquids often during the day
- Drink at least 6-8 cups of liquids per day
- Drink liquids and eat foods separately, at least 30 minutes apart
- Drink liquids even when you do not feel thirsty

Tips on eating:

- Eat small amounts every 2-3 hours
- Try foods that are dry, starchy or bland, like crackers, pretzels, dry toast or cereal
- If you feel better, add more food, like broth soups, fish, skim or 1% milk and fruit
- Try limiting very spicy foods, onions, cream, eggs and pastries

If the smell of food or drinks bothers you:

- Drink liquids through a straw to avoid their smell
- Eat cold or room temperature foods
- Open a window or use a fan to get rid of food smells in the room
- If possible, stay out of the kitchen. Ask someone else to prepare meals or buy prepared meals

### 4. Make lifestyle changes

These tips can help you make lifestyle changes:

- Wear loose clothing. Clothing that is tight around the waist can make nausea worse
- Relax and take your time while eating
- Sit up for 30-60 minutes after eating
- Rinse your mouth with a bland rinse before eating to keep it clean and moist
- Suck on hard candies or lemon drops to get rid of bad tastes in your mouth

### 5. Use complementary therapies

These therapies may help you feel better:

- Acupuncture
- Hypnosis
- Distraction techniques
- Music therapy

The information presented was gathered from CCO.