

Nausea and Vomiting

Chemotherapy can cause nausea and vomiting by affecting the stomach, & the area of the brain that controls vomiting, or both. This reaction to chemotherapy varies from person to person and from drug to drug. For example, some people never vomit or feel nauseous. Others feel mildly nauseated most of the time, while some become severely nauseated for a limited time during or after a treatment. Their symptoms may start soon after a treatment or hours later. They may feel sick for a few hours or for about a day. Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse if you are very nauseated and/or have vomited for more than a day or if your nausea is so bad that you cannot even keep liquids down.

Nausea and vomiting can almost always be controlled or at least lessened. If you experience this side effect, your doctor can choose from a range of drugs known as anti-emetics, which help curb nausea and vomiting. Different drugs work for different people, and it may be necessary to use more than one drug to get relief. Don't give up. Continue to work with your doctor and nurse to find the drug or drugs that work best for you.

You can also try the following ideas:

- Avoid big meals so your stomach won't feel too full. Eat small meals throughout the day, instead of two, or three large meals. Foods without a strong aroma like khichri, mashed potato, dal, biscuits, toast, custard & fruit jelly stay down better.
- Drink liquids at least an hour before or after mealtime, instead of with your meals.
- Eat and drink slowly.
- Drink frequently in small amounts. 8-10 cups is recommended intake.
- Do not eat and only sip cold fluids while your vomiting continues. Shards of ice made with boiled water are helpful to suck on.
- Stay away from sweet, fried, heavily spiced or fatty foods.
- Eat foods cold or at room temperature so you won't be bothered by strong smells.
- Chew your food well for easier digestion.
- If nausea is a problem in the morning, try eating dry foods like cereal, toast, or crackers before getting out of bed. (Don't try this if you have mouth or throat sores or if you are troubled by a lack of saliva.)
- Drink cool, clear, unsweetened fruit juices, such as apple or orange juice, coconut water. Avoid aerated or tinned juices and artificial flavoured drinks. Avoid aerated Cola drinks that contain caffeine.
- Suck on ice cubes, mints, or tart candies. (Don't use tart candies if you have mouth or throat sores.)
- Try to avoid odours that bother you, such as cooking smells, smoke, or perfume.
- Prepare and freeze meals in advance for days when you do not feel like cooking.
- Rest in a chair after eating, but don't lie flat for at least 2 hours after you've finished your meal.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes. And avoid tight fitting clothes while eating.
- Breathe deeply and slowly when you feel nauseated. Fresh air helps.
- Distract yourself by chatting with friends or family members, listening to music, or watching a movie or TV show.
- Use relaxation techniques. (See the section "Complementary Therapies.")
- Avoid eating for at least a few hours before treatment if nausea usually occurs during chemotherapy.

It is essential to replace body fluids lost by vomiting, with clear liquids like nimbu-paani, or weak tea. If these stay down, progress to fruit juice, lassi/chhach, etc.

Problems with taste

Many people find that your taste changes during chemotherapy. It is a temporary phenomenon, and easily dealt with.

- Eat cold foods like cheese or egg sandwich, drink a milkshake or your nutritional supplement chilled..
- Added sugar will mask the over salty taste you feel.
- Added salt will make “too-sweet” food” palatable.
- If food tastes “metallic”, use china or plastic dishes. Use a straw to sip soup or fluid.
- Chewing gum or elaichi may help overcome the “bad taste” in your mouth. Eat fresh fruit if possible. But avoid Paan Masala.
- Freshen your mouth with a solution of 1teaspoon baking soda in 2 cups of warm water.