

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

Diet and cancer care: nausea and vomiting

This information is part of a series of suggestions for adults to help relieve the symptoms caused by cancer or its treatment and to enable you to eat.

Nausea and vomiting can be a common side effect of your treatment, especially chemotherapy. Nausea and vomiting may also be the result of a stomach bug, a side effect of other medication, liver or kidney problems or by a blockage somewhere in your gut. It is important to tell your health care team if you are experiencing these symptoms in order to identify the cause and provide treatment.

Nausea is the sensation of unease and discomfort in the stomach with an urge to vomit. It is usually associated with a loss of appetite and can affect the amount and type of foods eaten.

When you are feeling nauseous

- It is important to try and eat small, frequent meals or snacks. Try to eat something every two to three hours. An empty stomach will make you feel more nauseous
- Strong smelling foods and cooking smells can make you feel more nauseous. Eat slowly in a well-ventilated room with relaxed surroundings. Cold foods may be better tolerated. If possible try to stay away from cooking smells
- If highly spiced or rich and fatty foods make you feel worse, avoid them. Instead, try:
 - dry biscuits, toast or crackers



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- salty snacks (peanuts, crisps)
- sharp-tasting foods (fruit, sorbet, yoghurt, fruit pastilles, boiled sweets)
- ginger flavoured drinks and foods
- peppermint tea, chewing gum or mint sweets
- You will need to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, but try not to drink too much with your meals, as this can increase feelings of bloating. Sip slowly throughout the day. Fizzy pops, left to settle before drinking, may help
- Try sipping nourishing drinks through a straw:-
 - milky drinks (drinking chocolate, malted drinks, milk shake)
 - fruit juices
 - soups
 - commercial supplements (Complan, Meritene)
 - prescribable nutritional supplement drinks if recommended by your doctor or dietitian
- There are medicines (anti-emetics) which your doctor can prescribe. Take these regularly before mealtimes or as prescribed to prevent nausea and vomiting
- Wear loose fitting clothing around your waist
- Try not to lie down for a couple of hours after eating and avoid being very active and bending over
- Complementary therapy may also be of benefit. In particular acupuncture, acupressure, hypnotherapy and relaxation techniques have been shown to help with nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy

If you are vomiting

- Don't force yourself to eat. Missing a couple of meals should do no harm unless this is happening regularly. Try introducing small amounts of dry plain foods or clear soup and gradually build up to your usual diet
- It is important to try to keep drinking to prevent dehydration and mineral losses

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- Commercial sports drinks or a homemade version can help to replace essential salts as well as fluid

Do it yourself rehydration drink recipe:

- 250ml pure fruit juice (orange/apple/grapefruit)
- 750ml water
- 1 -1.5g (a pinch) salt

Mix ingredients together and use within 24 hours

Rehydration solutions are available from your chemist or on prescription (for example dioralyte, electrolade or rapolyte)

- If you are not managing to keep down oral fluids for longer than 24 hours you should seek medical advice as soon as possible. Contact your specialist nurse or treatment area
- Don't forget to keep your mouth clean and fresh by brushing teeth, gums, tongue if possible. If using a toothbrush makes you feel worse, rinse your mouth and ask your nurse, doctor or dentist for more advice on mouth care
- If you are struggling to eat and losing weight, please ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a dietitian

Local dietetic department contact details:

Coventry Dietitians	024 7696 6161
Nuneaton Dietitians	024 7686 5098
Redditch and Bromsgrove Dietitians	01527 512043
Warwick Dietitians	01926 495321 extension 4258

Further information on diet and cancer is also available from:

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk

World Cancer Research Fund www.wcrf-uk.org

Patient Information

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