

# Nausea and Vomiting

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Nausea is the feeling of being queasy or sick to your stomach. It can happen with or without vomiting (throwing up).

Nausea can be caused by your cancer, or it may be a side effect of chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Other causes of nausea and vomiting include pain, fatigue, illness, medications, and the stress of coping with cancer.

Feeling nauseous for a long time can affect your appetite and could cause you to lose weight. If you vomit a lot, you can become dehydrated (lose too much fluid).

## A Word of Caution

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Seek immediate medical care if you are unable to take care of yourself, cannot stop vomiting, see blood in your vomit, or cannot keep liquids down.

## Treatment Options

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The best treatment for nausea or vomiting will depend on what is causing the problem:

- If you have nausea due to chemotherapy or radiation therapy, you may need to take prescription anti-nausea medication on a particular schedule to control your symptoms and better tolerate meals and specific foods.

- If your nausea is caused by anxiety or fatigue, your health care team may recommend physical and mental relaxation techniques.
- If your nausea is a side effect of medications or supplements, you may feel better when you take the medications with food instead of on an empty stomach, or when you make other adjustments to your eating or medication plan.

If one anti-nausea treatment does not work for you, another one might. Your health care team can help you find a treatment that makes you feel better.

### **Medication Advice**

- Ask your doctor about anti-nausea medications. There are excellent options available for relief.
- Follow the instructions on the medication label. Some medications may need to be taken on a schedule, whether or not you feel nauseous, in order to prevent nausea.
- To prevent nausea and upset stomach, do not take pain medications on an empty stomach unless your doctor or pharmacist tells you to do so. Having food in your stomach will help lessen stomach irritation.

## **Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting**

- Eat six to eight small meals a day instead of three large meals.
- Sip on beverages that provide calories—such as fruit juices, sport drinks, or flat sugar-sweetened soda pop—throughout the day. Drinking small amounts continually will help you get enough calories, nutrients, and fluids.

- Drink clear liquids as often as possible after vomiting to prevent dehydration and keep your mouth clean.
- Freshen your mouth by rinsing it with a solution made of 1 teaspoon of baking soda,  $\frac{3}{4}$  teaspoon of salt, and 1 quart of warm or cool water.
- Eat bland foods, instead of foods that are very sweet, fatty, greasy, or spicy.
- Eat dry foods (such as crackers, toast, dry cereal, or bread sticks) when you wake up and every few hours during the day when you are taking medications or when you feel nauseated.
- Try these tips to avoid strong odors, which can cause nausea:
  - Eat cool foods or room-temperature foods instead of hot foods. (Food odors are stronger when foods are hot.)
  - Eat in a well-ventilated room that does not smell of strong food or cooking odors.
  - Avoid strong odors such as perfume, aftershave, and scented body lotions.
  - Cook outside on the grill or use boiling bags to reduce odors.
- Create a peaceful, relaxed eating space to help calm you and make eating easier.
- Suck on tart hard candies, such as lemon drops, to relieve nausea and get rid of any bad taste in your mouth.
- Avoid eating your favorite foods when you feel nauseous so you don't develop a dislike of those foods.
- Try taking 0.5 to 1 gram of ginger extract along with prescribed anti-nausea medications. Ginger can help decrease nausea.
- Try using Sea-bands, which are elastic bracelets that apply pressure to an acupuncture point on each wrist. They can offer relief at a low cost and will not affect medications or therapies.

# Food Choices for Times of Intense Nausea and Vomiting

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Use the following chart to select foods for times when you have intense nausea and vomiting, such as on the day of therapy. The food choices in this chart are very limited and will not provide the calories, protein, and other nutrients you need over the long term. Therefore, you should let your health care team know if you are not able to eat other foods after a day or two.

## Recommended Foods for Periods of Intense Nausea and Vomiting

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Food Group	Recommended Foods
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juice-type commercial protein supplements (for example, Ensure Clear) blended with ice and eaten with a spoon</li> <li>• Cottage cheese and fruit</li> <li>• Cold sandwiches</li> <li>• Cheese and crackers</li> </ul>
Grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry toast</li> <li>• Saltines</li> <li>• White rice</li> <li>• Pretzels</li> </ul>
Fruits and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apple, cranberry, and grape juice</li> </ul>
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ginger ale</li> <li>• Caffeine-free and noncarbonated drinks, such as fruit punch and sport drinks</li> <li>• Ginger or chamomile tea</li> </ul>
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popsicles and fruit ices</li> <li>• Sherbet</li> <li>• Flavored gelatin</li> </ul>

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# Foods Choices to Manage Milder Nausea and Vomiting

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The following chart lists foods that are recommended for days when you have milder nausea and vomiting. Avoid foods that may cause further nausea and vomiting.

## Food Choices for Periods of Milder Nausea and Vomiting

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<b>Food Group</b>	<b>Recommended Foods</b>	<b>Foods That May Cause Upset</b>
Protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boiled or baked meat, fish, and poultry</li> <li>• Cold meat or fish salad</li> <li>• Well-cooked eggs</li> <li>• Cream soups made with low-fat milk</li> <li>• Luncheon meat</li> <li>• Lean ham</li> <li>• Nonfat yogurt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatty and fried meats</li> <li>• Fried eggs</li> <li>• Sausage</li> <li>• Milkshakes (unless made with low-fat milk or ice milk)</li> </ul>
Grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saltines and soda crackers</li> <li>• Bread and toast</li> <li>• Cold cereal</li> <li>• English muffins</li> <li>• Bagels</li> <li>• Plain noodles</li> <li>• Rice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doughnuts</li> <li>• Pastries</li> <li>• Waffles</li> <li>• Pancakes</li> <li>• Muffins</li> </ul>

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## Food Choices for Periods of Milder Nausea and Vomiting *(continued)*

<b>Food Group</b>	<b>Recommended Foods</b>	<b>Foods That May Cause Upset</b>
Fruits and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canned or fresh fruits</li> <li>• Potatoes (baked, boiled, or mashed)</li> <li>• Vegetable juice</li> <li>• Vegetables as tolerated (avoid if your appetite is poor or nausea is severe)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potato chips</li> <li>• French fries</li> <li>• Fried potatoes or vegetables</li> <li>• Vegetables in cream sauce</li> </ul>
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold fruit drinks</li> <li>• Caffeine-free soft drinks</li> <li>• Decaffeinated iced tea</li> <li>• Sport drinks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Coffee</li> <li>• Tea</li> </ul>
Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angel food cake</li> <li>• Sponge cake</li> <li>• Flavored gelatins</li> <li>• Vanilla wafers</li> <li>• Pudding made with low-fat milk</li> <li>• Ice pops</li> <li>• Juice bars</li> <li>• Fruit ices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desserts made with high-fat ingredients, like whole milk, cream, or butter</li> </ul>