

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is the feeling of being queasy or sick to your stomach. It may happen with or without vomiting. Nausea may be caused by your cancer or may be a side effect of medication, chemotherapy, or radiation.

Treatment Options

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 certain 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 changes 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 for Nausea and Vomiting

- Ask your doctor about anti-nausea medications. There are excellent options available that can help.
- 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.
- Some nausea medications can cause constipation. Ask your health care team about taking stool softeners (or other medication to prevent constipation) while you are taking anti-nausea medications.



WORD OF CAUTION

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



Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting

- Eat 6 to 8 small meals per day instead of 3 large meals. Try not to skip meals as an empty stomach can sometimes make nausea worse.
- Throughout the day, sip on beverages that have calories, such as fruit juices, sport drinks, or “flat” carbonated drinks.
- Try bland foods instead of fatty, greasy, or spicy foods.
- Eat dry foods like crackers, toast, dry cereal, breadsticks, or pretzels when you wake up and every few hours to settle your stomach.
- If smells bother you:
 - Try eating foods that are cold or at room temperature.
 - Avoid the kitchen during meal preparation and avoid cooking methods that take a lot of time, like slow cookers.
 - Eat in cool, well-ventilated rooms that don’t have any strong smells.
 - Cover an open cup with a lid and drink through a straw.
- Suck on hard, tart candies (like sugar-free lemon drops) to relieve nausea and freshen your mouth.
- Clean your mouth throughout the day with a soft toothbrush and gentle toothpaste. Avoid alcohol-based mouth rinses if your mouth is sore.
- Try ginger candies or ginger root tea, which may help to decrease nausea.
- Try wearing a wristband that uses acupressure points to help control motion sickness. One example is Sea-Bands.
- Create a peaceful, relaxed eating space to help calm you and make eating easier.
- Avoid strong smells, such as perfumes, body lotions, and room deodorizers.

Food Choices for Periods of Intense Nausea and Vomiting

Use the list below to choose foods for times when you have intense nausea and vomiting, such as on the day of therapy. The food choices in this list 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 1 or 2 days.

Foods

- Dry toast or cereal
- Saltine or soda crackers
- White rice, potatoes, noodles
- Pretzels
- Bread
- Bananas
- Applesauce

Liquids

- Clear, high-calorie, high-protein nutritional drinks
- Apple, cranberry, grape juice
- Ginger ale
- Non-carbonated drinks, such as fruit punch and sports drinks
- Ginger tea, chamomile tea
- Ice pops and fruit ices
- Sherbet
- Flavored gelatin
- Bouillon or broth



Foods Choices to Manage Mild Nausea and Vomiting

The following list shows foods that are recommended for days when you have milder nausea and vomiting. Avoid foods that may cause more nausea and vomiting.

Food group	Foods to choose	Foods to avoid
Protein foods	Boiled or baked meat, fish, and poultry Cold ham or tuna salad Well-cooked eggs Cream soups made with low-fat (1%) milk Lunch meat Lean ham Fat-free yogurt	Fatty and fried meats Fried eggs Sausage Milkshakes (unless made with low-fat milk or ice milk)
Grain foods	Saltines, soda crackers Bread, toast Cold cereal English muffins Bagels Plain noodles Rice	Doughnuts Pastries Waffles Pancakes Muffins
Fruits and vegetables	Canned or fresh fruits Potatoes (baked, boiled, or mashed) Vegetable juice Vegetables as tolerated (avoid if your appetite is poor or your nausea is very bad)	Potato chips French fries Fried potatoes or vegetables Vegetables in cream sauce
Beverages	Cold fruit drinks Caffeine-free soft drinks Decaffeinated iced tea Sport drinks	Alcohol Coffee Tea
Desserts	Angel food cake Sponge cake Flavored gelatins Vanilla wafers Pudding made with low-fat (1%) milk Ice pops Juice bars Fruit ices	Desserts made with high-fat ingredients, like whole milk, cream, or butter

