

Nausea and Vomiting after Chemotherapy

Adapted From: <https://www.eviq.org.au/patients-and-carers/patient-information-sheets/managing-side-effects/3100-nausea-and-vomiting-during-cancer-treatment>

When am I likely to get nausea and vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting usually happens in the first few hours to days after treatment.

Some people get nausea and vomiting before their treatment. This can happen because they had nausea and vomiting before, and they are worried that it will happen again.

How can I manage nausea and vomiting?

Your doctor will prescribe antisickness medicine for you, to help with nausea and vomiting.

Take this medicine how your doctor tells you to, even if you don't feel sick.

This helps to keep nausea away. It is much easier to stop nausea before it starts.

What if I keep vomiting?

When you vomit you lose water or fluids (liquids) from your body. If you vomit a lot, you can lose a lot of fluids. This is called dehydration.

Signs of dehydration are:

- you feel light headed or dizzy or confused
- your heart feels as if it is skipping or going very fast
- you have a severe headache
- your urine (wee) changes, e.g. you don't pass as much as usual, or it is a very dark colour

Important

Contact your doctor or nurse immediately if you:

- have a temperature of 38°C or higher
- have chills, sweats, shivers or shakes
- are feeling sick and vomiting all the time (can't keep any food or drink down)
- have signs of dehydration

If you can't contact your doctor or nurse, go to the nearest hospital emergency department for help.



Dehydration can be very serious.

If you are vomiting, try to drink plenty of water to replace fluids in your body.

Do not do this if you are 'fluid restricted' and not allowed to drink a lot of water. Talk to your doctor about what you should do.

Remember: Take your anti-sickness medicine at the right time (even if you don't feel sick)

What else can I do for nausea and vomiting?

- Ask to see a dietitian who can help you with your diet.
- If you feel anxious, try things to help you relax, like listening to music or meditating.
- Try using acupressure bands on your wrists (used for travel sickness).

Eating	Drinking
• eat small meals 5 or 6 times a day • eat slowly and chew your food well • eat cold or warm food (not hot) • don't cook meals when you feel sick • let someone else do the cooking • don't eat very sweet, fried, fatty or spicy foods, or foods with a strong smell • try peppermints or peppermint tea • try foods with ginger in them, e.g. ginger biscuits or ginger beer	• have plenty of water during the day (unless you are fluid restricted) • drink water slowly in small sips • don't drink a lot before meals • don't drink alcohol • don't have drinks with caffeine in them

Cleaning and chemotherapy safety

Chemotherapy drugs can be in body fluids, including vomit, urine (wee) and faeces (bowel motion/poo) for up to 7 days after having chemotherapy. Chemotherapy drugs can be harmful to healthy people so it is important to clean up any body fluids correctly.

What to do

- Wear gloves to clean up any vomit or other body fluids, and don't use them for anything else.
- Put any cloths you use into a plastic bag and tie it up. Put this in another bag and throw it away.
- Wash any clothing or sheets with body fluids on them straight away. Use the longest washing machine cycle.
- If you vomit into a bowl, wash it out afterwards with water and detergent. Don't use it for anything else and throw it away at the end of your treatment.

Common questions

Why do some people get nausea and vomiting and others don't?

There are many chemotherapy drugs and some of them make people sick more than others. Also, some people get sick more easily, e.g. people who get travel sickness or have a lot of anxiety.

Should I eat when I feel sick?

Sometimes having an empty stomach can make feeling sick feel worse. If you feel sick but haven't eaten anything you could try some dry crackers or a piece of toast.

What if I get nausea a lot?

If your nausea stops you from doing important or enjoyable things, talk to your doctor or nurse. They may be able to change your antisickness medicine.



Things to ask your doctor or nurse

- ✓ What problems should I call you about?
- ✓ What anti-sickness medicine should I take?
- ✓ When should I take it?
- ✓ What should I eat and drink?

Contact numbers:

Daytime:

Night/weekend:

Glossary

Nausea = feeling sick (as though you are going to vomit)

Vomiting = being sick (throwing up)

Anti-sickness medicine = medicine to stop you feeling sick or vomiting (also called anti-emetics)

Dehydration = not having enough water or fluids (liquids) in the body