

Nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy

You are probably aware that chemotherapy can cause nausea and vomiting. These effects are temporary and can often be controlled. Here are some tips to help you manage them.

What is the difference between vomiting and nausea?

Vomiting is the act of throwing up, i.e., expelling the contents of the stomach through the mouth.



Nausea is more like “feeling sick,” which is an unpleasant sensation in the stomach area that makes you feel like you are going to vomit. Most nausea does not lead to vomiting.

When are nausea and vomiting likely to occur?

Most often, nausea and vomiting begin in the evening or the day after a chemotherapy treatment.

Sometimes nausea begins before a chemotherapy treatment. This is called “anticipatory nausea.” It can be caused by anxiety and stress from knowing that treatment is about to begin.

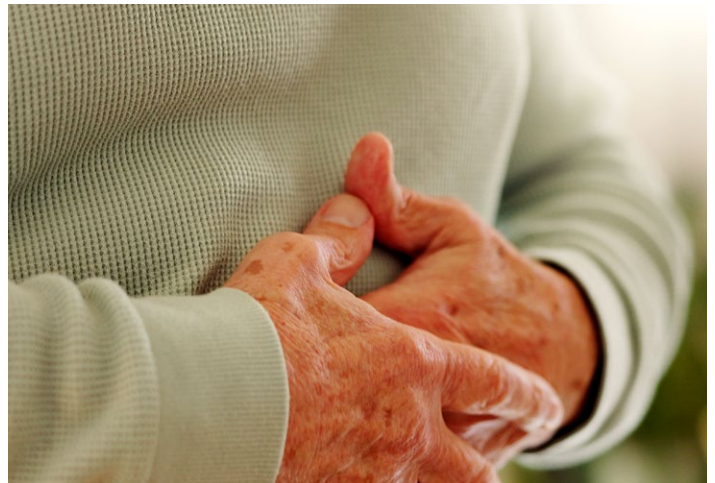
How long do these effects last?

Nausea can last for 2 to 3 days. Vomiting rarely lasts longer than 24 hours.

What causes nausea and vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting can be caused by several factors:

- The cancer itself
- Chemotherapy treatment
- Anxiety and stress
- Constipation
- Other medications you are taking



Did you know?

Not everyone undergoing chemotherapy experiences nausea and vomiting. Everyone reacts differently.

What is the best way to reduce nausea and vomiting?

The most effective way is to take anti-nausea medication.

They work best if you take them as soon as you feel sick. Be sure to take them as prescribed and follow your pharmacist's advice.

If you feel nauseous before your treatments, tell a member of your healthcare team. You may be offered medication that can be taken a few minutes before each treatment.



What are some other ways to reduce nausea and vomiting?

- Eat smaller meals more often.
- Eat slowly.
- Eat crackers or dry biscuits.
- Drink water or other non-alcoholic liquids regularly, but not while eating.
- Remain seated for 30 to 60 minutes after each meal.
- Eat cold or lukewarm foods rather than hot foods.
- Brush your teeth regularly with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Use complementary therapies such as music therapy, visualization, and relaxation.

As much as possible, avoid eating foods that are:

- Very fatty (fried foods) and very sweet
- Spicy
- Strong-smelling

During treatment, try to distract yourself. Bring a book or some music. You can bring someone with you. Volunteers are also available on site.

When your appetite returns, take advantage of it: eat a good meal. This will help you regain your strength.

What signs and symptoms should you watch for?

Call a member of your healthcare team immediately if:

- You still feel nauseous after 3 days, even when taking your medication.
- Your vomiting lasts more than 24 hours, even when taking your medication.
- You have been unable to drink or eat for 24 hours.

If this happens, you may need to take another medication. If you are unable to reach a member of your healthcare team, go to a hospital emergency room.

Who should I contact for help or questions?

Contact your healthcare team using the contact information in your oncology passport.

