

Nausea

Tips to Control

Some chemotherapy (chemo) medicines cause nausea and/or vomiting. This usually happens within 24 hours of receiving chemo. You may have nausea for a few days after chemo is completed. This is referred to as “delayed” nausea. After repeated chemo, some people worry that they will have nausea so they begin to feel it even before the treatment starts. This is called anticipatory nausea.

Not all chemotherapy causes nausea and vomiting. When these discomforts are felt there are medicines and methods to ease the feelings. If you have nausea and vomiting and are having a difficult time eating, ask for a consult with a dietitian.

Antiemetics

Antiemetics are medicines that help control nausea and vomiting. They are most effective if given before chemo. Antiemetics may be given by mouth, in the vein or by other routes.

You may be given an antiemetic to use at home. You may be told to take this medicine around the clock or to take as needed. Some patients are asked to take their antiemetic at home before coming in for chemo.

You may need to try more than one antiemetic before you get relief. Do not give up. Tell your health care team if your nausea is not controlled. It is not unusual to take two or more different medicines to prevent or relieve nausea and vomiting.

Prevention

- Take your nausea medicine as directed. Don't wait until nausea is a problem before taking medicines.
- Avoid an empty stomach.
- Avoid strong smells and unpleasant odors.
- Drink enough liquids so that your urine is light colored.
- Practice good mouth care.
- Wear loose-fitted clothing.
- Sit or recline with your head elevated for at least 30 to 60 minutes after eating.

Treatment

- Take antiemetic(s) as directed.
- Apply a cool wet rag to your forehead or neck.
- Eat dry foods (such as crackers, toast, etc.) when you awaken, before moving around.
- Move slowly.
- Open a window or use a fan to feel fresh air movement.

- Sip room temperature carbonated drinks such as cola or ginger ale.
- Don't force yourself to eat.
- Drink enough liquids so that your urine is light colored.
- Pay attention to which foods trigger and/or soothe nausea.
- Use distraction, such as music, puzzles, games, TV, reading, etc.
- Learn relaxation techniques.

Resources

From the National Comprehensive Cancer Network:

http://www.nccn.org/patients/resources/life_with_cancer/managing_symptoms/preventing_nausea.aspx.