

**NAUSEA AND VOMITING**

Oncology

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**What are nausea and vomiting?**

- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) is the unpleasant sensation of wanting to vomit.
- Vomiting is the forceful expulsion of part of the content of one's stomach through the mouth.
- Nausea and vomiting can be caused by many different factors (e.g. chemotherapy, radiotherapy or certain medications).
- Nausea is a common side effect of chemotherapy and is sometimes accompanied by vomiting.

**What to do**

- It is important that you take the anti-nausea medication prescribed by your doctor (e.g. metoclopramide [Maxeran/Metonia], ondansetron [Zofran], aprepitant (Emend), lorazepam [Ativan], dexamethasone [Decadron]).
- Sometimes, a combination of two or even three medications is prescribed to better control nausea and vomiting.
- Take your medications 30 minutes before meals or as indicated on the container.
- Follow the eating advice below.

**Advice**

- Prevention is the first thing to do.
  - Eat a light, low-fat meal before each treatment.
  - Avoid foods that are deep-fried, fat, spicy or sugary and foods with a smell that bothers you.
  - After eating, wait at least 30 minutes before going to bed.
  - Maintain good mouth hygiene. For instance, brush your teeth at least twice a day, rinse your mouth often and after each meal and remove your dental prostheses when starting to feel sick.
- **If you have nausea:**
  - Eat four to six light meals a day. Avoid large meals.
  - If the smell of food bothers you, choose foods that are cold or at room temperature.
  - Avoid spicy or deep-fried foods and desserts.
  - Suck on hard candies, Popsicles or ice cubes.
  - Drink 30 minutes before or after meals.
  - Avoid caffeine (e.g. coffee, Mountain Dew, Dr. Pepper, Red Bull, etc.) and smoking.
  - Try relaxing or another relaxation technique to focus on something else.
  - Wear comfortable clothing.
- **If you are vomiting:**
  - Staying hydrated is very important; drink small amounts of fluids often throughout the day (e.g. water, Jello, Gatorade, diluted fruit juice).
  - Always use mouthwash after vomiting.
  - Wait 30 to 60 minutes before drinking any more fluids.
  - Gradually add dry foods (e.g. soda crackers, toast, rice cakes and dry cereal).
  - Finally, add foods containing protein (e.g. eggs), followed by low-fat dairy products.

**When to consult the Oncology Clinic?**

If medication does not bring any relief and your nausea or vomiting persist, you can contact the Oncology Clinic in your area between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

**You should go to the Emergency Department if...**

- You have been vomiting for over 24 hours;
- You are vomiting blood, brown, coffee-coloured liquid, or black, charcoal-coloured liquid;
- You are feeling very weak or as if you are about to faint;
- You are unable to eat or drink anything.