

Managing Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea, with or without vomiting, is a common side effect of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. It is important to try to keep your nausea under control because the inability to eat and drink adequately can cause weight loss and dehydration.

- **Chemotherapy** – nausea/vomiting can occur on the day you receive your treatment and can last for three or more days afterward.
- **Radiation therapy** – nausea/vomiting can occur one to two hours after receiving treatment to your chest, abdomen, or pelvis and might last for several hours afterward.
- Other causes of nausea and vomiting include immunotherapy, intense pain, surgery, illness, medications, constipation, and anxiety.

Tips to Minimize Nausea:

- Eat six to eight small meals a day instead of three large meals. Eat slowly.
- Eat during the time of day when you feel least nauseated.
- Bland foods and foods served cool or at room temperature might be easier to eat than spicy or hot foods. Foods that are very sweet, fatty, greasy, or spicy can aggravate nausea.
- Eat sitting upright, and do not lie down for at least one hour after eating. Rest sitting upright or in a reclined position with your head raised.
- If food odors cause nausea, prepare meals that do not need to be cooked, or heat food in the microwave. Use a room freshener with a gentle smell, such as lavender or peppermint.
- Create a peaceful and relaxed eating place, if possible. The room should be well-ventilated and not smell of strong food or cooking odors.
- Consume beverages between meals rather than with meals. Avoid carbonated beverages if these cause belching.
- Try ginger tea (recipe on reverse side), candied ginger, or ginger snaps.
- To help remove bad tastes, rinse your mouth before eating with a solution made of 1 teaspoon of baking soda, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon of salt, and 1 quart of warm or cool water. Sucking on hard candies can also help.
- Dehydration is a serious concern if you are vomiting frequently. Rinse your mouth after vomiting, wait 30 minutes, and then try to sip clear liquids – apple juice, sports or electrolyte drinks, flat soda, broth – as often as possible.

Medication Advice:

- Your physician will prescribe anti-nausea medications. It is important to take them as prescribed for as long as you need them. Do not wait until you are nauseated! If your nausea persists, tell your doctor because another medication might be more effective.
- Do *not* take medications on an empty stomach unless your doctor or pharmacist tells you to! Doing so is, in general, a recipe for disaster. Having something in your stomach will help control your nausea. Eat dry foods, such as crackers, toast, dry cereal, or breadsticks, when you wake up and every few hours during the day.

Foods for Days of Intense Nausea

This list is very restrictive; do not limit yourself to these foods for more than 1 to 2 days. Avoid eating 1-2 hours before treatment if nausea occurs during therapy.

	Recommended	Foods That May Cause Nausea
Protein group	Juice-type commercial protein supplements (for example, Ensure Clear™)	All others
Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta	Dry toast, saltines, rice, pretzels	All others
Fruits and vegetables	Apple, cranberry, and grape juice	All others
Beverages, desserts, and miscellaneous	Flat ginger ale, caffeine-free and noncarbonated drinks such as fruit punch and sports drinks, ginger tea, ice pops, fruit ice, sherbet, and flavored gelatin	All others

Foods for Managing Nausea and Vomiting on Other Days

	Recommended	Foods That May Cause Distress
High-protein foods	Boiled or baked meat, fish, and poultry; cold meat or tuna salad; eggs; cream soups made with low-fat milk or broth-based soups; luncheon meat; nonfat yogurt	Fatty, fried, or spicy meats; fried eggs; sausage; milkshakes (unless made with low-fat milk or ice milk)
Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta	Saltines/soda crackers, white bread, toast, cold cereal, Cream of Wheat, oatmeal, English muffins, bagels, plain noodles, rice	Donuts, pastries, waffles, pancakes, muffins, sugary cereals
Fruits and vegetables	Potatoes (baked, boiled, or mashed), vegetables as tolerated (omit if appetite is poor or nausea is severe), vegetable juices, canned or fresh fruits	Potato chips, french fries, creamed or fried potatoes or vegetables
Beverages, desserts, and miscellaneous	Cold fruit drinks, caffeine-free soda and iced tea, sports drinks, angel food cake, sponge cake, flavored gelatins, vanilla wafers, pudding (made with low-fat milk), ice pops, juice bars, fruit ices, sherbet, limited butter	Alcohol, coffee, tea, pies, ice cream, coffee cake, rich desserts, cream sauce or gravy, strong-odor foods



Ginger Tea

Peel about 1 inch of fresh ginger root (found in the produce section of your grocery store) and grate until you have ½ to 1 teaspoon of grated ginger root.

Cover with 8-10 ounces of boiling water. Steep for 10-15 minutes, and then strain.

You can add lemon juice or honey to enhance the flavor.

- **Tip:** Don't eat your favorite foods if you are nauseated. If you become sick after eating, you could develop a permanent dislike for them.

Source: Adapted from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; Cancer Guide 6th Edition