

Say No to Nausea During Cancer Treatment

Here's why it's important to promptly address nausea and vomiting—and how you can navigate these common conditions during treatment.

September 11, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Nausea means feeling sick to your stomach or as though you need to vomit. It's a common side effect of chemotherapy, radiation and some other cancer treatments and meds as well as a symptom of cancer itself, especially tumors in the brain, liver and gastrointestinal tract. Don't delay treating nausea and vomiting. Not only can these conditions disrupt your ability to stick to a treatment regimen, but they can also lead to malnutrition and dehydration—which is why you should sip liquids throughout the day. These tips can help you navigate nausea on your way to recovery.

Embrace the Bland

Avoid spicy, greasy and fried foods as well as fragrant, strong odors (open a window when cooking). Start with broths, smoothies, bread and oatmeal to see what you can tolerate. Danielle Penick, RD, of the blog *Survivors' Table*, advises skipping your favorite foods so you won't associate them with illness. Instead, save them for posttreatment. For more help, seek an oncology dietitian.

Take Notes

What soothes one cancer patient might sicken another, so pay attention to your routine and diet and note what works for you. Does taking a short walk after eating help, or is it better to rest? When do you prefer to eat? Can you sleep or relax with your upper body elevated? Does salt or lemon juice make foods more or less tolerable? These tactics help some folks but not others. You do you.

Doriot Kim

Eat Roots and Leaves

An Asian root herb, ginger calms the stomach and aids in digestion. Add slices of ginger to your teas and smoothies, shred some into your meals, indulge in crystalized candied ginger or take a supplement. Mint, especially peppermint, is also versatile and healthful. It can be added to drinks and enjoyed as hard candies. Used as essential oils and aromatherapy, mint can also calm and relax.

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Mind Your Meds

Emetic describes something that causes vomiting. Doctors often prescribe cancer patients antiemetic drugs—up to a combo of four. Antianxiety meds may also help, as can over-the-counter options like Dramamine and Bonine. What about marijuana for nausea? The American Society of Clinical Oncology experts advise that “doctors do not yet have enough evidence to recommend it as a treatment.”

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Try Alternatives

Acupuncture and acupressure have been shown to help with nausea. Try this: With your palm facing up, apply pressure on your inner arm slightly below the wrist. Or try acupuncture bracelets, such as Sea-Bands. Other complementary therapies include relaxation methods (such as breathing exercises) and distraction techniques like counting backward, playing video games and singing.

