Chemotherapy Induced Nausea & Vomiting Symptom Management
Patient Education

What You Should Know
Nausea is an uncomfortable or uneasy feeling in your stomach. Vomiting is bringing up or throwing up the stomach contents through the mouth.

Nausea and vomiting are some of the most common and distressing side effects for patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment. Nausea and vomiting affects over 50% of cancer patients.

Types of Nausea & Vomiting (N/V):

- Anticipatory:

  Nausea and vomiting may happen before you get your treatment. This is a response that can be triggered by something that reminds you of the treatment or the unpleasantness of the treatment. For example, anticipatory nausea and vomiting may happen if you think of your treatment, see the nurse or doctor, the hospital, or certain odors (including food).

- Acute:

  Acute nausea and/or vomiting happens from a few minutes to a few hours after treatment and can last up to 24 hours.

- Delayed:

  Delayed nausea and/or vomiting happens more than 24 hours after treatment and can last days.

What causes nausea and vomiting?
Many things can cause nausea and vomiting such as physical, psychological, and treatment related sources. No matter the cause, our goal is to prevent or at least decrease your nausea and/or vomiting.

Prevention
Prevention is important to reduce your risk of nausea and/or vomiting.

- Preparing for Treatment:
  - Ask your healthcare team to explain your chemotherapy plan and the side effects of each drug.
    - Ask your healthcare team what medications will be prescribed to prevent and control your nausea and vomiting.
Learn and understand how and when to take these medications.
- If you have additional questions or concerns, please ask a member of your healthcare team to review your treatment plan with you so you have a full understanding.
- Talk to friends and family members about helping with shopping and cooking in case you have nausea.

**Diet and Nutrition:**
- Eat small amounts of food often during the day.
- Eat before you get too hungry.
- Eat dry foods such as cereal, toast, or crackers without liquids in the morning.
- Drink fluids throughout the day such as water and juices.
  - Carry a water bottle with you during the day to sip from.
- Avoid heavy, high fat and greasy foods.
- Avoid drinking liquids at meals.
- Avoid caffeine and smoking.
- Look for foods that are light or white in color.

These types of foods often fall into the category of foods that are bland and easy to digest.

- **Some examples of “white foods”:**
  - Toast, crackers, pretzels
  - Cream of wheat, rice or oatmeal
  - Skinless chicken that is baked or broiled
  - Canned peaches, bananas, or other soft, bland fruits and vegetables
  - Boiled potatoes, rice, or noodles
  - Yogurt, pudding

**Tips to Decrease Risk of Nausea:**
- Chew your food well. Try eating foods and drinks that were easy for you to take when you were nauseated from the flu, morning sickness, or motion sickness.
- Eat foods that are cool or room temperature, since hot foods have a stronger odor and may increase your nausea.
- If you are not eating much, try to eat meals and snacks high in protein and calories. You may want to add liquid meal replacements to your diet like Boost or Ensure, available in most grocery stores.
- Keep foods handy that need little or no preparations, such as pudding, peanut butter, cheese, and eggs.
- When you are feeling well, shop in advance of chemotherapy and stock up on foods you know you can eat when you’re not feeling well.
- Do some cooking in advance and freeze in meal-size portions.
- Many people find their appetite is better in the morning. Take advantage of this and eat more in the morning.

**Lifestyle:**
- Avoid strong odors in food or in your environment.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Do not lie flat for 2 hours after eating. Sitting up or reclining with your head elevated can help digestion and decrease stomach aches.
- Avoid vigorous exercise right after eating as this may cause more stomach discomfort.
- Get plenty of rest.
- If you have a bad taste in your mouth:
  - Rinse your mouth often.
- Suck on sugar-free candy such as mints, sour balls, or lemon drops.

### Treatment
Sometimes nausea cannot be relieved by preventative medication measures and alternative treatments need to be considered. Call or talk to your care team at any time if your nausea and/or vomiting is not relieved or worsening.

- **Medications**
  Not all chemotherapy causes nausea and vomiting. However, if your chemotherapy treatment is likely to cause nausea and vomiting, your healthcare team may prescribe one or more of the following common anti-nausea medications:
  - aprepitant (Emend®)
  - dolasetron (Anzemet®)
  - granisetron (Kytril®)
  - ondansetron (Zofran®)
  - palonosetron (Aloxi®)
  - prochlorperazine (Compazine®)
  - promethazine (Anergan®), (Phenergan®)
  - lorazepam (Ativan®)
  - metoclopramide (Reglan®)
  - dexamethasone (Decadron®)
  - famotidine (Pepcid®)
  - ranitidine (Zantac®)

  These medications may be prescribed for you to take before, during, or after your chemotherapy treatment. Do not wait until you are throwing up to take your nausea medications. They will be more effective if you take them as soon as you are starting to feel nausea or around the clock (every 6 to 8 hours) as directed by your care team.

- **Distraction & Relaxation**
  - Get fresh air or go to a relaxing place such as a park.
  - Relax and try to keep your mind off the chemotherapy.
  - Bring soothing music or relaxation CDs, with you to your treatment.
    - If you want, bring a movie to watch during chemotherapy.
    - Try healing touch therapy such as Reiki or massage.

- **Complementary Medicine**
  While there is no evidence to support the effectiveness of these treatments to relieve nausea and vomiting, some patients have reported they feel better when receiving these treatments in addition to others described above:
  - Acupuncture
  - Acupressure
  - Electroacupuncture
  - Exercise
  - Meditation
  - Ginger
  - Grape juice
  - Some complementary medicines may interact with your treatment. Please discuss any other complementary medicines with your care team first.

### Vomiting
If you vomit, hold off eating or drinking until your stomach settles. Once nausea has passed, try drinking small amounts of clear liquids. Take it slow to help decrease your chances of vomiting again.

When you are able to keep down clear liquids, try a full-liquid (fluids that are opaque, such as soups, milk) or a soft diet, gradually working up to your regular diet.

**Contact Your Health Care Team If:**

- Fever (temperature above 100.4 F or 38 C).
- Nausea and/or vomiting is not relieved by your current anti-nausea medications.
- Nausea and/or vomiting lasting more than 24 hours.
- Nausea and vomiting is interfering with your ability to eat.
- Vomiting 4 to 5 times in 24 hours.
- Nausea, and/or vomiting along with constipation.
- If your stomach looks swollen and/or feels hard to the touch.

**Number to call is:** (650) 498-6000

This document is intended for use by staff of Stanford Hospital and Clinics. No representations or warranties are made for outside use. Not for reproduction or publication without permission. Direct inquiries to Stanford Hospital and Clinics. Cancer Center/Cancer Syndromes. 12/2013.