Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects - Esophagitis

**Esophagitis** is when your esophagus becomes inflamed (swollen) and sore. Your esophagus is the tube that connects your throat to your stomach. Certain cancer treatments, including radiation therapy, can harm the tissues that line the inside of your esophagus. This can make it painful or hard to swallow and eat.

Esophagitis may happen 2 to 4 weeks after you start cancer treatment and often improves after you complete treatment. It may take time for symptoms to go away. It is important to talk with your health care team about any symptoms you have during or after treatment.

**Signs of Esophagitis**
- Pain when you swallow or problems being able to swallow
- Heartburn or acid regurgitation ("wet burps")
- Pain in your upper abdomen (belly)
- Bleeding, including bright red vomit or black, tarry stool

**Nutrition Tips to Manage Esophagitis**
Talk with your doctor, nurse or dietitian about other ways to help manage your symptoms at home.

The following nutrition tips may help:
- Stay away from spicy foods, such as pepper, chili powder and curry.
- Stay away from acidic food and drinks, such as tomatoes and citrus fruits and juices.
- Try a liquid or soft-food diet, such as mashed potatoes, soups and nutrition supplement drinks.
- Take small bites and chew your food well.
- Drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day to stay hydrated.
- **Do not** drink alcohol or caffeine.
- **Do not** smoke or use tobacco products.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

Treatment of Esophagitis

Your doctor may order medicine to help manage your symptoms of esophagitis. Use the following table for how to use these medicines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pantoprazole or Omeprazole</td>
<td>• Your doctor will tell you the dose that is best for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Take this medicine at least 30 minutes before you take Carafate (Sucralfate).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Carafate (Sucralfate)</td>
<td>• Your doctor will tell you the dose that is best for you.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• It is best to take this medicine after each meal and at bedtime.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Crush up the pill and mix it into 2 tablespoons of warm water.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Take this medicine every 6 hours.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Take this medicine if you continue to have heartburn or your pain is not managed by the medicines recommended in Step 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranitidine (Zantac)</td>
<td>• This is an over-the-counter medicine that you can buy at your local pharmacy or grocery store.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Take one 150 mg pill or two 75 mg pills before bedtime.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use Magic Mouthwash if your pain is not better after following Steps 1 and 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Magic Mouthwash</td>
<td>• Your doctor may order this mouthwash to help coat, protect and numb your esophagus.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Use this mouthwash before you eat and at bedtime as needed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To keep your tongue from becoming numb, it may help to use a syringe when you use the mouthwash.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Talk with your doctor if your pain does not improve with Steps 1, 2 and 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prescription Pain Medicine</td>
<td>• Your doctor may order medicines to help with your pain.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
When to Call the Doctor
Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher

**A fever can be life threatening if not treated. Your doctor may ask you to go to the hospital.**

- Severe pain that makes you unable to eat or drink
- Blood in your vomit or stool
- Swollen abdomen (belly) or severe abdominal pain
- Severe weakness, dizziness or fatigue
- Little or no urine output

More Information and Resources
Talk to your doctor, nurse or dietitian if you have any questions. For more information, ask for these patient education handouts:

- Eating Tips for Managing Cancer Treatment Side Effects
- Cancer Survivorship
- Cancer Internet Resources
- Nutrition Internet Resources
- Patient and Family Resource Center
- JamesCare for Life Programs

Go to this video link: [http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos](http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos) to learn more about your cancer diagnosis, treatment and care.