Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is a sick, uncomfortable feeling in your stomach that often comes before you vomit or throw up. Here are some things you can do to reduce these side effects of cancer treatment.

Anti-Nausea Medicine

Your doctor may order an anti-nausea medicine for you to help prevent nausea and vomiting.

- Take your anti-nausea medicine as ordered by your doctor. You may need to continue taking this medicine for 2 to 3 days or longer, after treatment, even if you feel fine.
- Unless told otherwise, take your medicine with food.
- If you are unable to keep pills down, many anti-nausea medicines can be given in another form, such as injection, suppositories, under the tongue or on the skin. Tell your doctor if you are having problems, so another form of this medicine can be ordered for you.

Constipation

Some chemotherapy drugs and pain medicines (opioids) may cause constipation. Constipation is when you are not able to have a bowel movement (BM) for several days or have stools that are hard or difficult to pass. This side effect may cause or add to your nausea.

To lessen constipation:
- Take a stool softener each day.
- Take a mild laxative if you are constipated.
- Stay physically active and drink plenty of water.
- Call your doctor if you have gone more than 3 days without having a BM (bowel movement).
Eating Hints

- Do not eat spicy, greasy and fried foods.
- It may be helpful to limit the amount of fluids you drink with meals.
- Eat small meals often instead of 3 large meals. Eat slowly and whenever you feel like eating.
- Try to stay away from sights, sounds and smells that might cause nausea. Write down what triggers or causes your nausea or vomiting.
- Try eating bland dry foods (plain toast or saltine crackers).
- Try foods that are easy on the stomach (clear broth, rice or bananas).

Other Helpful Hints

- If possible, do not lie down for at least 2 hours after eating. Rest by sitting up or reclining with your head elevated.
- To reduce the feeling of nausea, take slow deep breaths through your mouth.
- Suck on hard candies such as peppermints or lemon drops.
- You may find it helpful to use relaxation exercises or a pressure point wristband to help you cope with this problem.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Unable to drink and keep fluids down
- Nausea or vomiting that stops you from eating or drinking, even after you have taken your anti-nausea medicine
- Abdominal pain or nausea with cramping and constipation
- Blood in your vomit
- Dark colored vomit
- Dizziness, especially when you stand up
- A decrease in how often you urinate
- Dark colored urine
- Loss of more than 2 pounds in a week

For more information, ask your nurse for the patient education handout, *Cancer Therapy: Managing Side Effects - Nausea and Vomiting.*