Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea is a sick, uncomfortable feeling in your stomach that often comes before vomiting or throwing 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 1 to 2 days after treatment, even if you feel fine.
- Take your medicine at least 30 minutes before eating.
- If you are unable to keep pills down, most anti-nausea medicines can be given in another form, such as injection, suppositories or under the tongue. 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 (narcotics) 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.

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

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 frequent meals instead of 3 large meals. Eat slowly and whenever you feel like eating.
- Avoid unpleasant sights, sounds and smells that might trigger nausea.
- 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
- Do not lie down for at least two 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.
- Write down what triggers or causes your nausea or vomiting.

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
- Abdominal pain
- Blood in your vomit
- Dizziness, especially when you stand up
- A decrease in how often you urinate
- Dark colored urine
- Loss of more than 5 pounds in a week or 10 pounds in a month

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