

Eating Tips for Dealing with Nausea

For patients experiencing nausea during cancer treatment

This pamphlet covers:

- Foods that may be easier to eat if you are nauseated
- Foods that may make nausea worse
- Eating and drinking tips to help control nausea



Nausea is a common side effect of cancer and cancer treatment.

If you have been given a prescription for anti-nausea medication, it is important to take them as prescribed by your doctor.

There are also things you can try with your food and drink to make eating easier, such as drinking small amounts of fluid often during the day and avoiding certain foods.

Try foods that may be easier to eat

If you have nausea, eating can be very difficult. Try foods that are easier to eat, like:

- Broth, water, peppermint tea
- Popsicles, watered-down juices, Gatorade
- Flat pops – like Ginger ale, Sprite or 7-Up without fizz
- Jell-O, sherbet
- Dry crackers, Melba toast, pretzels
- Dry cereals, dry toast, plain cookies
- Boiled potatoes, noodles, rice

Then, add more foods after 1 or 2 days:

- Light soup – chicken and rice, vegetable
- Boiled or baked lean meat, poultry and fish
- Skim or 1% milk, low fat yogurt, cheese
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruit and vegetables

Avoid foods that can make nausea worse

- Fried meats, fried eggs, sausage, bacon
- Fatty luncheon meats – salami, pepperoni, bologna
- Gravy, rich sauces, cream, sour cream
- Broccoli, brussels sprouts
- Onion, garlic
- Doughnuts, pastries
- Coffee, alcohol

Drink lots of fluids

It is important to drink enough fluid to avoid dehydration, especially in hot weather. Dehydration happens when you do not have enough fluids in your body.

- Try to drink 6 to 8 eight ounce cups or 1.5 to 2 litres daily of fluid like flat Ginger ale, watered-down juice and broth.
- Do not gulp large amounts quickly. Instead, drink often during the day.
- You may find it easier to separate fluids from solid foods. For example, have a drink one half hour before or after eating a meal.
- Try sipping peppermint or ginger tea to soothe nausea.

Avoid an empty stomach

You may feel nauseated when your stomach is empty. To avoid nausea caused by an empty stomach:

- Eat small amounts of bland, dry foods such as Social Tea cookies or dry toast.
- Keep soda crackers at your bedside to eat before getting up.

Avoid the smell of foods that bother you

The smell of food can cause nausea. To avoid nausea caused by food smells:

- Eat cold or room temperature foods because they do not smell as strong as hot foods
- Drink fluids through a straw to avoid their smell.
- Fresh air may help reduce nausea. Open a window or use a fan to help get rid of food smells in the room.

During or after meals

- If nausea usually occurs at a certain time of day, try to eat more when you feel best.
- If you cannot eat your usual amount of food at mealtimes, eat smaller amounts more often.
- Save your favorite foods for when you feel better. Eating your favorite foods when nauseated can make you not like them.
- Relax and take your time while eating. Eating too quickly or not being relaxed can make nausea worse.
- Sit in an upright position for an hour after eating. Lying down right after a meal can cause nausea.
- Try sucking on hard candies such as peppermint, ginger, or lemon drops to help get rid of any bad taste in your mouth.
- Wear loose clothing. Clothing that is tight around the waist can make nausea worse.

Helpful Resources at the Princess Margaret Patient & Family Library

- “Goes Down Easy: Recipes to help you cope with the challenge of eating during cancer treatment” cookbook
- “What to Eat When You Don’t Feel Like Eating” pamphlet
- “[How to Manage Loss of Appetite](#)” pamphlet

To search online for these and other helpful resources, go to www.theprincessmargaret.ca:

- Select “Cancer Health Information” on the right menu bar
- Visit the Patient & Family Library on the main floor of Princess Margaret

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