

How to Manage **Nausea & Vomiting** at Home

This guide will help you understand:

What is nausea & vomiting?

What causes nausea & vomiting?

What you can do to help manage your nausea & vomiting.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

One:carepath gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide.

What is nausea & vomiting?

Nausea and vomiting can be upsetting symptoms of some chronic conditions.

Nausea [*feeling as though you might throw up*] can make you feel like you have:

- More saliva [*spit*] in your mouth,
- Clammy skin,
- A fast heart rate that makes you feel light headed, or
- Have butterflies in your stomach.

Vomiting [*throwing up*] may or may not happen with nausea. Sometimes after you have thrown up and when your stomach is empty, you may experience retching or 'dry heaving'.



Tell your healthcare team if you have nausea & vomiting and are finding it difficult to manage.

What causes nausea & vomiting?

There are many reasons for nausea and/or vomiting, for example being constipated, anxiety, certain medical conditions, and medications or treatments like chemotherapy.

What you can do to help manage your nausea & vomiting.

Managing nausea and vomiting works best when you play an active role.

- Try to figure out if there is a cause for your nausea and vomiting.
- Is it better or worse at different times?
- What helps or makes it worse?
- You may want to use a symptom diary to record information about your nausea & vomiting. Tracking this information will help you talk to healthcare team about your nausea and vomiting.

Physical steps you can try:

- **Medication:** If you take medication for your nausea and vomiting, take it as prescribed so your symptoms don't get too bad. Nausea may be a side effect of other medication you are taking. Take this medication with food if advised to do so.
- **Use a cool damp cloth:** If you're feeling like you might throw up, place a cool damp cloth on your forehead or the back of your neck.
- **Wear loose fitting clothing:** Clothing that is tight around your waist can make nausea worse.
- **Stay upright:** For about 1 hour after eating, this can help aid with digestion. Laying down right after a meal can cause nausea.
- **Eat smaller amounts of food more often:** Having an empty stomach can make your nausea worse.

- **Change when you eat:** If you have nausea in the early morning, try eating breakfast a little later.
- **Eat slowly:** Eating too fast may make your nausea worse.
- **Try ginger:** For example, candied ginger, ginger cookies, ginger tea or ginger ale (ginger ale does not have any real ginger in it but still relieves nausea).
- **Drink plenty of water:** 30 to 60 minutes before or after meals, instead of with meals.
- **Keep your mouth fresh:** Brush your teeth, or use a non-alcohol mouthwash or club soda to rinse your mouth. This can help get rid of the taste in your mouth that can make you feel sick.
- **Keep the air around you fresh:** If you can, stay away from cooking smells and scents like perfume or smoke.
- **Avoid:** Any foods that are greasy, spicy or very sweet. Choose plain foods like toast, bagels, crackers and rice. You might want to avoid dairy products or heavy foods.

Mental activities you can try:

- **Think positively:** Positive thinking may ease nausea and vomiting.
- **Distract yourself:** Do something that you enjoy to try and keep yourself mentally busy. For example, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, needlework or video games.
- **Relax:** Try meditation, mindfulness, or relaxation therapy. Learning to relax and to change the way you think may help you cope with nausea and vomiting.

Relaxation techniques you can try at home.

Ask if someone on your healthcare team can help you get started. You can also learn some on your own. Some techniques include:

- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group.

- **Deep breathing exercises:** Slow your breathing to the point where you are as relaxed in your breathing as possible. Breaths should be deep and fill your lungs.
- **Meditation:** Sit or lie in a comfortable position for 20 minutes. Be aware of your breathing, your sensations (including your pain), your thoughts, and feelings.
- **Guided Imagery:** Form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation.
- **Yoga:** Can relax your breathing, ease muscle tension, and energize your mind and body.
- **Massage:** Helps reduce all over muscle tension and pain, which can help you relax.
- **Hydrotherapy:** It uses flowing water to relax muscles.
- **Music and art therapy:** Listening, playing music, drawing and painting can help you to relax.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

Speak with your healthcare team if nausea & vomiting is a problem for you. Your worries and questions are important to you and them. Your healthcare team may speak to you about the different medications you can take.

- Let them know if you think your medical condition or medications are the reason you have nausea and vomiting.
- Let your healthcare team know if a medication is working for you or if you're having side effects. You may have to try a few different ones to know what works best for you.
- Talk to them before taking over-the-counter medication, including vitamins and herbal remedies.

When vomiting lasts for a long time, you can get dehydrated. If you have homecare, they may be able to help you with your symptoms so that you don't have to go to the hospital.

If you have constipation along with nausea, vomiting, a swollen abdomen and/or abdominal cramping or pain, speak to your healthcare team as soon as you can.

Tips on sharing your symptoms with your healthcare team:

Make some notes about your nausea and vomiting symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them.

- Has there been a change in your nausea and vomiting?
- How bad is it?
- When does it happen and how long does it last?
- What makes it better or worse? What have you tried already?
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking including over the counter medications.

Notes:
