MANAGING CHEMOTHERAPY SIDE EFFECTS: NAUSEA AND VOMITING

WHAT ARE NAUSEA AND VOMITING?
They are two different experiences. Sometimes, however, they do happen together. Nausea means having a queasy/upset stomach and not wanting to eat. Vomiting means throwing up.

WHAT CAN CAUSE NAUSEA AND VOMITING?
Radiation therapy, especially to the esophagus, stomach, abdomen, pelvis or spine can cause nausea and vomiting. Certain types of chemotherapy can also cause this to happen. In addition, some narcotics may cause nausea and vomiting.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT/DECREASE NAUSEA AND VOMITING?
• Take anti-nausea medicine as scheduled by your nurse or doctor.
• When nausea occurs, take the medicine. Do not wait for the nausea to become severe or for the vomiting to start before taking your medicine.
• Tell your nurse and doctor about your symptoms – when they start and how long they last. They can help you adjust your schedule for taking medicine.

TIMING OF TREATMENT
• If you are taking chemotherapy pills, and they are likely to cause nausea and vomiting, don’t take them on an empty stomach.
• Talk to the doctor about taking your medicine in divided doses instead of all at once. It is possible in some treatments.
• Ask your doctor or nurse if it is possible to take the chemotherapy pills with your anti-nausea medicine at bedtime.
• Check to see if your treatment schedule can be adjusted.

CHANGE THE WAY YOU EAT
• Eat lightly on your treatment day.
• Eat small portions of food.
• Eat more frequently.
• Eat foods that are soft and low in fat.
• If you have been vomiting, eat salty foods such as canned soup or broth.
• Try saltines, salted crackers and toast.
• Don’t eat greasy or fried foods.
• If the smell of food causes nausea, let someone else do the cooking for you while you take a walk or rest.
• Try meals and snacks that don’t need to be freshly cooked or that you have frozen ahead of time and can be warmed up.

• Avoid citrus fruits and juices with a high acid content (orange, lemon, grapefruit, fresh pineapple).
• Avoid highly spiced foods.
• Avoid, or reduce, alcoholic beverages.
• Stop or reduce smoking.

**Drink Liquids**
• Drink clear, cool beverages – apple or cranberry juices, flavored gelatin, carbonated beverages such as ginger ale, colas, popsicles, ice cubes made of any kind of favorite liquid. Drink clear soups or broth.
• Sip liquids slowly through a straw.
• If vomiting, rest 30 minutes before starting to sip liquids.
• If liquids at meals cause you to feel full, take them 30-60 minutes before or after meals.

**Reduce Unnecessary Motion**
• Change position slowly.
• Try lying or sitting still until nausea has passed.
• Remember, not to lie flat for about 2 hours after eating. Rest upright or in a semi-reclining position.

**Keep Your Mind On Other Things**
• Watching TV, reading, or having friends visit may be helpful. Listening to music, doing relaxation exercises, resting and sleeping can all be helpful in keeping our mind off the problems.
• Anxiety may also make nausea and vomiting more severe. If you feel especially anxious, talk to your nurse or doctor about taking medicine for it and/or learning relaxation exercises.

**When Should I Call The Doctor or Nurse?**
• If the anti-nausea/vomiting medicine is not working for you.
• If vomiting continues for 12 hours.
• If you feel confused or especially weak.
• If you have been unable to eat or drink in a 24 hour period.
• If nausea continues more than 24 hours.