

Nausea

Nausea can happen before, during or after cancer treatment. It may be from the cancer itself or a side effect from treatment. A person can have nausea with or without vomiting. Nausea can usually be controlled with medications. It is important to take anti-nausea medications as prescribed by your doctor. If you are unsure how to take them or are taking them but still having nausea, ask your pharmacist, nurse or doctor.

Unmanaged nausea can lead to poor intake of food and fluids. This handout provides food ideas to help you meet your nutrition needs when you are feeling nauseous.

- Sip fluids often through the day and aim for 1.5 – 2 litres (6-8 cups of fluid daily). Examples of fluids are water, juice, sports drinks, soups, smoothies, herbal teas, and nutritional supplements such as Ensure® or Boost®.
- Eat small frequent meals and snacks. Try to eat something every 2-3 hours even if you don't feel hungry. Hunger can make feelings of nausea stronger.
- Try starchy foods such as crackers, toast, plain noodles, roti, baked Bannock, rice, salted potato chips, pretzels, or digestive cookies.
- If the smell of food makes your nausea worse, avoid foods with strong odours. Choose cold foods or foods at room temperature, such as cheese and crackers, yogurt with fruit, cereal with milk, trail mix or nuts, peanut butter and toast, or a smoothie.
- Reduce food odours by opening windows while cooking or cooking outside when possible. Fresh air before or during a meal often helps. Avoid eating in a stuffy or warm room.
- Limit spicy, greasy or fried foods.
- Try to avoid eating your favorite foods when you are nauseous as you could develop a dislike for them later.
- Try crystallized ginger, ginger or peppermint tea, lemon juice, or mint.
- Try to relax and take your time while eating.

If you have tried these ideas and you are unable to eat and are losing weight, ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian at the cancer centre.