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A Guide To Managing Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting

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Understanding and Managing Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting

Two of the most uncomfortable and disruptive side effects of chemotherapy can be nausea and vomiting. This is called CINV, or chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting. Up to 90% of people treated with chemotherapy can experience these issues if they are not treated with medicine to prevent these effects. These side effects can be incredibly draining and make it difficult to maintain daily responsibilities such as work and family. As 95% of patients have stated, CINV directly impacted their quality of life, one of the most significant factors in choosing or continuing chemotherapy treatment. Patients often cite CINV as a major factor in choosing to stop chemotherapy treatment.

CINV can affect patients in two different stages.

First stage is more immediate, as it can happen within minutes following the chemotherapy, and may continue for up to 24 hours after the chemotherapy is administered.

Second stage can develop over 24 hours after the chemotherapy treatment and can persist for a few days. Those who are more susceptible to experiencing CINV at either stage are people under the age of 50 years old. Other factors include the following groups of people who may have these issues: those who tend to have motion sickness; those with a history of anxiety; those who have been treated with chemotherapy previously; women who had morning sickness during pregnancy; and those who have never drank alcohol or have consumed very little alcohol in general.

How can it be managed?

Before even starting treatment, you should have an open discussion with your doctor and subsequent team in order to learn about the treatment itself and possible associated symptoms of nausea and vomiting, as well as to weigh in on how to treat these symptoms. By doing this, you can not only anticipate what may happen, but you will also be educated and armed with possible means in which to deal with and alleviate these symptoms.

Sometimes it may also be beneficial to link up with a support group with others who have experienced or are experiencing these symptoms. The social support can be helpful during a difficult time. Other ways to manage CINV proactively can include eating smaller meals, drinking a lot of fluids, and eating food at room temperature. Additionally, be sure to take medication exactly as prescribed, and avoid any food that may exacerbate the symptoms. By following these proactive methods, you can try to better manage your CINV so that you can return to your daily life.



Managing Chemotherapy-Induced Nausea and Vomiting with Eating

Nausea and vomiting, two of the most uncomfortable possible side effects of chemotherapy, can be very disruptive to a patient's daily life. In a recent survey, more than 50% of patients stated that these effects caused them to cancel plans with friends or family; 46% had to alter their diet; about 40% abstained from exercise; and others stated that these side effects caused them to be unable to go to work. Vomiting can lead to dehydration, which can affect one's appetite, ability to eat, and can cause weight loss and fatigue.

However, there are ways to manage CINV. First, anti-emetics, which are anti-nausea drugs, can help reduce nausea and vomiting and allow one to continue drinking and eating.

Also, there are holistic ways to address nausea, such as working with a therapist to employ methods that foster relaxation and create distractions from these feelings; or focus on steps to feel more in control in an often uncontrollable situation.

Examples of such methods are progressive muscle relaxation, biofeedback, guided imagery, music therapy, or acupuncture.

In addition to these techniques, there are measures you can take to better control and manage nausea and vomiting at home. Try drinking clear cold fluids such as tea, broth, or ginger ale, as well as eating Popsicles or Jell-O. Another suggestion is to eat hard aromatic candies such as peppermints or lemon drops. And, be sure to stick with dry crackers or toast and stay away from fatty, fried, or pungent foods. In order to try and get as many calories as possible, strive to take in small amounts of high-calorie foods such as ice cream, yogurt, milkshakes, and pudding, or syrups or milk; try to avoid low-fat food unless higher-fat food increases nausea. Also, freezing broths, soups, or other liquids into small ice chips can make them easier to consume.

After eating, sit up for about an hour while digesting, possibly while being distracted by watching television, reading, or talking with a friend or family member. By using these methods, you can learn to better manage your nausea and vomiting so that you can continue to eat and nourish yourself on your journey to wellness.



**Managing
Chemotherapy-Induced
Nausea and Vomiting
with Metastatic Breast
Cancer**

Metastatic breast cancer, which is also referred to as stage IV breast cancer, is indicative of the fact that the cancer has spread to other organs in the body, such as the brain, lungs, or liver. This can sometimes be a recurrence after an initial cancer diagnosis has been made. Nausea and vomiting can be caused by various issues in a person with metastatic breast cancer. Some of this nausea and vomiting can be cited as a reaction to pain medication, such as prescribed opioids; some people have difficulty tolerating such pain medications. Also, if the cancer has spread to the brain or to one's gastrointestinal tract, this can also exacerbate any symptoms of nausea or vomiting. Another element, such as experiencing a long duration of treatment, or a change or increase in treatment dosages, can contribute to nausea and vomiting. There are some approaches to managing these issues.

Before starting any new cancer treatment, you should actively engage with their doctor or treatment team to set expectations in case the treatment will cause these symptoms, as well as discussing possible anti-emetics or other solutions to manage these negative side effects.

Also, if you have had nausea and vomiting in the past due to previous treatments, you may not have the same reaction to current treatments. There may be new drugs or treatments that have become available since your last cancer diagnosis. Speaking to your team to map out a plan as to how to deal with nausea and vomiting if it occurs is a great way to be prepared.

If nausea and vomiting do become a problem, it is best to journal and log these reactions. Journaling over a period of time will permit a doctor to possibly connect these reactions to a certain treatment or to another element. Once a connection is made, or an aspect of treatment is pinpointed as exacerbating feelings of nausea or vomiting, treatments can sometimes be tailored to reduce these side effects; meaning treatments or doses can sometimes be stopped for a period of time, or dosages can be reduced. Open communication and daily documentation can be key in managing nausea and vomiting so that you can endure treatment and also live more comfortably.

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