



Dietary advice for adults suffering from nausea following radiotherapy or chemotherapy

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Feeling sick during your treatment is not uncommon, however it is usually only temporary. It is important that you mention any symptoms to your nurse or doctor so that you can get the treatment that is right for you. There are anti-sickness medications available, which can be prescribed by your doctor.

The following tips may help until the sickness has settled:

- Try eating small meals and snacks at regular intervals, e.g. every two hours. Eat slowly and chew your food well
- Concentrate on eating foods you enjoy
- Try to keep away from the smell of cooking, let someone else prepare your meals if possible. Sit near an open window for fresh air whilst you eat
- Cold foods and drinks may be better as they tend not to smell as strongly as hot foods. Many can be prepared in advance and are as nutritious as hot dishes.
- Try using a straw from a covered container to take drinks if the smell causes you to feel nauseous
- Dry foods such as toast, crackers and plain biscuits may help prevent nausea
- Salty foods e.g. crisps, pretzels, yeast and meat extracts, soups, savoury biscuits may also help
- Avoid taking drinks at the same time as meals as this may fill you up. Sip drinks half an hour before and after each meal

- Fried, fatty, spicy or sweet foods can sometimes make nausea worse - avoid these foods if they affect you in this way
- Try sharp tasting foods such as lemon mousse, sorbet and fruit yogurts
- If you are sick, rinse your mouth and then try sipping cool, clear liquids through a straw. Sometimes fizzy drinks such as soda water, ginger ale or carbonated mineral water are best
- Eat at the times of day when you feel most well
- If you are not eating much, try nourishing drinks such as malted milk drinks, milky coffee or milk shakes
- Chew sugar free gum or suck sugar free mints to freshen your mouth. Frozen ice pops and ice-lollies may also help
- Sit up for at least 30 minutes after eating
- Avoid wearing tightly fitting clothes, particularly around your waist
- Fresh air or going for a walk prior to eating may help

If you need further advice or are losing weight, please ask your radiographer, nurse or doctor to refer you to the dietitian.

Meal and snack ideas

The information below is a sample list of foods and drinks which may be better tolerated by your body. Try to eat small amounts every two hours and remember to take drinks half an hour before or after meals and snacks.

Breakfasts:

- Cereal with milk
- Unbuttered toast with yeast or meat extract
- Dry biscuits, rusks or oatcakes
- Boiled or poached egg

Main meals:

- Soup with plain bread
- Sandwich with meat, fish, cheese or egg and salad
- Cheese or egg on toast
- Cooked meat, fish, poultry (oven baked or grilled without fat or skin)
- Lentils or pulses
- Mashed/boiled potatoes
- Rice or pasta
- Vegetables

Puddings:

- Sponge and custard
- Rice pudding
- Mousse
- Sorbet
- Tinned fruit

Snacks:

- Savoury biscuits/crackers
- Pretzels / salted crisps
- Fruit
- Boiled sweets
- Plain yoghurt
- Salted nuts
- Plain or ginger biscuits

Drinks:

- Ginger Ale
- Fruit squash
- Milky drinks e.g. plain cold or warm full fat milk, malted milk drinks, hot Chocolate
- Nutritional supplement drinks e.g Meritine Energis or Complan
- Smoothies

Sources of further information

University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

The Patrick Room

Cancer Centre

University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

Queen Elizabeth Hospital

Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TH

Telephone: 0121 371 8417

About this information

This guide is provided for general information only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Every effort is taken to ensure that this information is accurate and consistent with current knowledge and practice at the time of publication.

This information was produced by the QEHB Radiotherapy Dietitian.

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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