

Nausea and Vomiting

What are nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is a feeling of stomach upset and often is the feeling you have just before you vomit. Vomiting is throwing up food and fluid from the stomach through the mouth. Sometimes you may feel nausea without vomiting. Vomiting can protect the body by getting rid of harmful substances.

What is the cause?

Nausea and vomiting are symptoms that may be caused by many things, such as:

- Stomach flu, which is an infection caused by a virus
- Motion sickness (like being seasick or carsick)
- Food poisoning or other infections
- Alcohol use
- Unpleasant odors or sights
- Pregnancy
- Head injury
- Stress and anxiety
- Problems with the inner ear
- Cancer treatment
- Heart attack

It can also happen as a side effect of some medicines.

How is it treated?

If you have severe vomiting, your body can lose too much fluid and you may get dehydrated. To avoid this problem, you need to replace the lost fluids.

- Rest your stomach, but make sure that you keep getting fluids. You can do this by not eating anything and by drinking clear liquids only. If you have been vomiting a lot, it's best to have just small, frequent sips. Drinking too much at once may cause more vomiting. Clear liquids include:
 - Water
 - Weak tea
 - Fruit juice mixed half and half with water
 - Light-colored soft drinks without caffeine (like 7-UP) after stirring until the bubbles are gone (the bubbles can make vomiting worse)
 - Sport drinks or other rehydration drinks
- Avoid liquids that are acidic, like orange juice, or caffeinated, like coffee. If you have diarrhea, don't drink milk.

- It may be easier to keep down liquids that are cold. Suck on ice chips or Popsicles if you feel too sick to sip fluids. Build up to drinking larger amounts of clear fluids. If you vomit, wait an hour and then start over with small sips.
- You may start eating soft, plain foods when you have not vomited for several hours and are able to drink clear liquids without further upset. Good choices are:
 - Jell-O
 - Soda crackers
 - Toast
 - Plain noodles
 - Rice
 - Cooked cereal
 - Baked or mashed potatoes
 - Soft-boiled eggs
 - Applesauce
 - Bananas
- Eat slowly and avoid foods that are hard to digest or may irritate your stomach such as foods with acid (like tomatoes or oranges), spicy or fatty food, meats, and raw vegetables. You may be able to go back to your normal diet in 3 days or so.
- If you have cramps or stomach pain, it may help to put a hot water bottle or heating pad on your stomach. Cover the hot water bottle with a towel or set the heating pad on low so you don't burn your skin.
- Rest as much as possible. Sit or lie down with your head propped up. Don't lie flat for at least 2 hours after eating.
- Don't take aspirin, ibuprofen, or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) without checking first with your healthcare provider. NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin, may cause stomach bleeding and other problems. These risks increase with age. Read the label and take as directed. Unless recommended by your healthcare provider, do not take for more than 10 days for any reason.
- Call your healthcare provider if:
 - Your symptoms are getting worse.
 - You keep having severe symptoms for more than 1 or 2 days, or you are not getting better after a few days.
 - You start having symptoms such as blood in your vomit, bloody diarrhea, or severe stomach pain.

If you have severe vomiting, your body can lose too much fluid and you can get dehydrated. Dehydration can be very dangerous, especially for children and older adults. You may also be losing minerals that your body needs to keep working normally. Your healthcare provider may recommend an oral rehydration solution, which is a drink that replaces fluids and minerals. If you are very dehydrated, you may need to be given IV fluids at the hospital.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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