

Nausea and Vomiting

What is happening

Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms in serious illness.

There are many possible causes, and nausea is **not always caused by a stomach problem**.

These symptoms can interfere with:

- Eating and drinking
- Hydration
- Sleep and comfort
- Taking medications

Common causes

Medications

Some medications may contribute to nausea, including:

- Opioids
- NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen)
- Steroids
- Antibiotics
- Vitamins or supplements

Other common causes

- Pain
- Anxiety or emotional distress
- Constipation
- Reflux or heartburn
- Stomach irritation
- Excess mucus or secretions
- Headaches
- Changes in body chemistry (“metabolic imbalances”)

What you may see

- Upset stomach
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Increased weakness

- Difficulty taking medications or fluids
- Sensitivity to smells or food

What you can do

Diet and fluids

- Offer small meals or snacks
- Try low-fat foods
- Encourage fluids if tolerated
- Nutritional drinks (such as Ensure or Boost) may be easier than solid foods

Comfort measures

Some non-medication approaches may help:

- Ginger tea or ginger candy
- Fresh air
- Cool compresses
- Avoiding strong smells
- Relaxation techniques:
 - Music
 - Meditation
 - Quiet environment

Medications

Prescription medications are available to help control nausea and vomiting.

Use medications as directed by the hospice team.

When to call hospice

- Vomiting is not controlled with available medications
- Blood is seen in vomit
- Increasing abdominal pain
- Fever develops
- No urination for more than 8 hours
- The patient cannot keep fluids or medications down
- Increasing weakness or confusion develops