



Symptom Management: Nausea and Vomiting

What is nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is an unpleasant wavelike feeling in the back of the throat and/or stomach that may lead to vomiting. Vomiting is throwing up the contents of the stomach through the mouth. Retching is the movement of the stomach and oesophagus without vomiting and is also called dry heaves. Feeling sick and being sick are not symptoms that all patients with cancer suffer from. However, if troubled by these symptoms they can make the sufferer feel miserable and weak, and can seriously affect their quality of life.

Causes

There can be many causes for nausea & vomiting, for example: they can be related to feeling constipated; being dehydrated; imbalances of some of the salts in your blood; related to some anticancer treatments (for example: chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting - CINV); pressure within the brain; or indeed some medicines can make you feel sick. This list is not exhaustive; there are many other causes for feeling and being sick.

Because there are many causes it is important that you let a member of your health care team know that you are feeling or being sick, so that they can make a comprehensive assessment of the possible cause, or causes, and therefore recommend appropriate treatments or intervention to control this and help the sufferer feel better as quickly as possible.

Some individuals can suffer anticipatory nausea and/or vomiting, it is known as ANV. ANV is nausea and/or vomiting that occurs prior to the beginning of a new cycle of chemotherapy in response to conditioned stimuli such as the smells, sights, and sounds of the treatment room. There are some interventions that can be tried to help with ANV.

Management

It is possible to reverse most causes of nausea and vomiting, sometimes this can be done with medication, of which there are many anti-sickness medicines to choose

Source: National Lung Cancer Forum For Nurses

from, these can be given in tablet form, by suppository, by injection or by syringe driver. If the anti-sickness medication is not helping there are many others your health care team can try.

Other treatments include reversing constipation, regulating any salt imbalances, getting rehydrated, reducing pressure within the brain - this may involve the use of steroids medication, medicines causing nausea can be altered. Again this list is not exhaustive please let a member of the healthcare team know if either of these symptoms concern you.

If you have suffered CINV - (chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting) it is essential that you contact your chemotherapy team or nurse specialist so that this can be assessed and managed quickly.