



## NAUSEA and VOMITING

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one has been diagnosed with a type of blood cancer. You may experience side effects from the treatment you receive. Nausea and vomiting are common side effects. How can you manage them?

This fact sheet will help you:

- Get an overview of nausea, vomiting, and malnutrition
- Understand their causes
- Learn how to manage these side effects and optimize your health and well-being
- Get a list of questions to ask your healthcare team





Managing side effects is an important part of cancer treatment. Be sure to talk to your healthcare team about any side effects you may have. They can help you manage these as you go through treatment.

Good nutrition is an important part of cancer treatment. But it can be difficult to eat well if you are experiencing nausea and vomiting.

## Nausea and vomiting

Both cancer and your treatment can cause side effects. Common side effects of many cancer treatments are nausea and vomiting.

### About nausea and vomiting

- Nausea is having an upset stomach or feeling like you are going to throw up
- Vomiting is throwing up what is inside your stomach
- They may happen together or separately
- Some people will have mild nausea and vomiting
- For others, it may be more severe

### Causes of nausea and vomiting

There are many reasons why you may feel sick to your stomach or throw up:

- Your cancer
- Your treatment
- Your medications
- Another medical condition

Talk to your healthcare team if you experience new or worse symptoms. If you vomit uncontrollably, tell your healthcare team right away.

## Why good nutrition matters

Eating well to avoid malnutrition is important during cancer treatment, but nausea and vomiting can make eating and drinking difficult. This increases your risk of malnutrition and dehydration.

### About malnutrition and dehydration

- Malnutrition happens when you don't eat or absorb enough calories or nutrients for your body to function well
- Dehydration happens when you don't drink or absorb enough liquids for your body to function well
- Both can happen when you lose your appetite or lose weight too quickly
- They can increase your risk of health complications, hospitalization, infections, loss of muscle strength, and overall poor quality of life
- They may delay, change, or stop your cancer treatment

Keep track of your weight and talk to your healthcare team if you lose weight or have side effects that make it difficult for you to eat.

Ask for a referral to a **registered dietician** for advice.

## Managing side effects

Learning about side effects helps you know what to expect and how to manage them better. Sometimes the side effects may improve as you adjust to treatment. Most side effects go away after treatment ends.

### Medication to relieve your nausea and vomiting

Always talk to your doctor before you take any over-the-counter medication for nausea and vomiting. Your healthcare team can provide medications to reduce and prevent these symptoms. Once these side effects start, it can be hard to stop them, so be sure to keep taking your medication as prescribed, even if you feel well. That means the medication is working.

- Anti-nausea medication prevents or reduces nausea and vomiting
- Combining medications often works best
- Your doctor may prescribe pills or give medication to you intravenously (in a vein) if you are in the hospital
- Call your doctor or pharmacist if you vomit after taking a medication

Talk to your healthcare team if your medication is not working well. It may need to be adjusted or changed.





Ask your healthcare team about **complementary therapies**. They may help relieve nausea.

Some therapies that may help include acupuncture, therapeutic massage, deep breathing, hypnosis, meditation, and other relaxation techniques.

## The following tips may help you prevent or control nausea and vomiting:

### Tips to manage what you eat

- Eat small meals throughout the day: avoid skipping meals, as an empty stomach can make nausea worse
- Try dry, bland foods like crackers, toast, cereal, and pretzels
- Avoid fried, spicy, and strong-smelling foods that may trigger nausea
- Try cold foods that don't have strong smells and let food cool before you eat it
- Use ginger to help relieve nausea (ginger ale, ginger gum, ginger tea)
- Stay sitting up after meals

### Tips to manage what you drink

- Drink lots of water and fluids
- Try sipping water, ginger ale, or sports drinks with electrolytes
- Drink small amounts throughout the day, rather than larger amounts all at once

### Tips to manage your environment and stay comfortable

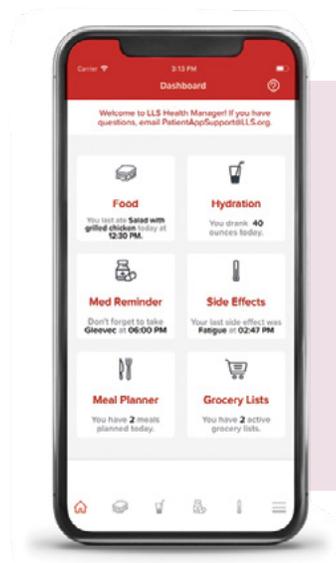
- Reduce smells if possible
- Use a fan when cooking and limit air fresheners and perfumes
- Dim lights and keep the temperature cool
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing
- Wear gloves (or have friends and family do so) when cleaning up vomit as protection from exposure to cancer drugs



## Severe side effects

Contact your healthcare team right away if you experience any of these serious side effects:

- Fever of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher
- Nausea and/or vomiting with stomach pain or severe headache
- Blood in your vomit (may be liquid or look like coffee grounds)
- Trouble keeping your medication down
- Vomiting for more than 2 days
- Dehydration: dark urine, small amounts of urine, extreme thirst, dry mouth, fast heart rate (pulse), headaches, dizziness, confusion



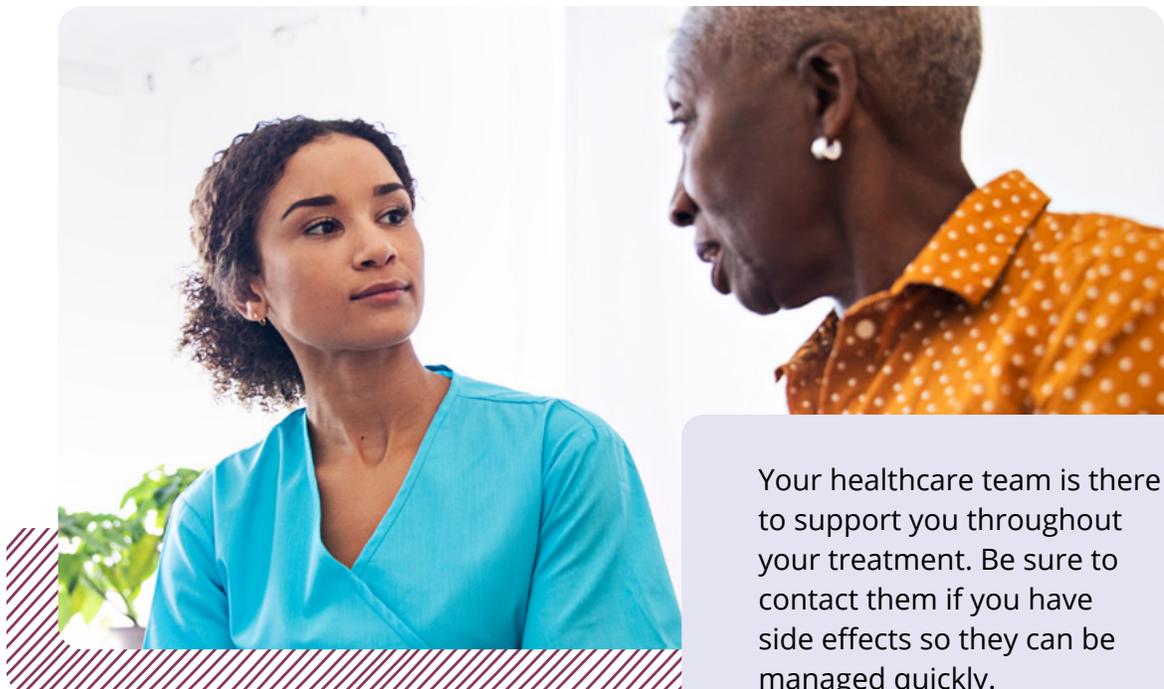
### Track your side effects with the **LLS Health Manager App**

[bloodcancers.ca/health-manager-app](https://bloodcancers.ca/health-manager-app)

Managing your side effects is an important part of cancer care. Tracking your medication, side effects, and food and nutrition intake allows you to share the information easily with your doctor to identify patterns and strategies.

## Questions to ask your healthcare team

- Are nausea and vomiting likely side effects of my treatment?
- What can I do to manage these side effects?
- Can you recommend any medications I can take?
- If I vomit soon after taking the medication, what should I do? Who do I call?
- Can you give me ideas of what to eat and drink that could help?
- Can you refer me to a registered dietitian?
- Can you refer me to supportive care for help managing side effects?
- Are there any complementary therapies that might help?
- What signs or symptoms require a visit to a healthcare professional or a trip to Emergency?



Your healthcare team is there to support you throughout your treatment. Be sure to contact them if you have side effects so they can be managed quickly.

This fact sheet was reviewed by  
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This fact sheet was made possible  
thanks to the support of



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**Never hesitate to contact us, we're here to help!**

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