

Help with eating if you have... nausea and vomiting

This leaflet gives advice on preventing and controlling nausea and vomiting.

General advice

If you are feeling sick or being sick, it can be difficult to get all the fluid and nutrition that you need. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- If you've been prescribed anti-emetic (anti-sickness) medication, make sure you take these exactly as prescribed, usually about 30 minutes before eating.
- Try to take small, frequent meals with snacks in between, because having an empty stomach can make you feel worse.
- Eat slowly and give your food time to settle by relaxing after meals in a sitting or slightly reclined position, instead of lying down.
- Have drinks between meals, rather than with your food.
- You may need to change the time of your meals so that you can eat at times when the sickness is well controlled.
- If you feel sick in the mornings, try eating plain biscuits or dry toast before you get up.
- If you are regularly being sick, try to increase your fluid intake to replace lost fluids.

If you are unable to keep fluids or your medications down, seek medical advice.

What can I eat?

There are some foods that are best avoided, but there are no rules – it is best to eat a little of what you fancy.

- Plain, dry foods, such as toast, crackers or plain biscuits, may help to settle your stomach.
- Salty foods like crisps, cheese or soup may be easier to eat.
- Try sipping a cold fizzy drink through a straw. You may find these are better if left to go flat.
- Ginger can help relieve sickness – try ginger biscuits, ginger beer, crystallized ginger or ginger tea. Peppermint tea or mints may help settle your stomach.
- Cutting back on caffeine and alcohol may help.
- Avoid very sweet, spicy, fatty or fried foods.

Sometimes, the smell of food or cooking can make the problem worse. To avoid these smells, you could:

- Take a walk or sit outside while the meal is cooking.
- Choose cold foods such as sandwiches, salads, cereal and milk or yoghurts as they have less smell than hot foods.
- Ask a friend or relative to prepare meals and cook for you.
- Try foods that only need to be heated up, such as ready meals or frozen leftovers. Check that food is properly reheated before serving.
- Avoid strong smelling foods.

If you continue to have nausea and vomiting, ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a dietitian. If constipation or poor mental health (fears/anxieties) is making you feel sick, treating this will help.

Useful Contacts

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk

World Cancer Research Fund www.wcrf-uk.org

Cancer Research UK www.cancerresearchuk.org

Talking Therapies – Berkshire Healthcare, Tel: 0300 365 2000 Email:

talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk Website: www.talkinghealth.berkshire.nhs.uk

Headspace or Calm – guided meditation and mindfulness www.headspace.com/ or www.calm.com/

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Produced by Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Dietitians

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