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Nausea and Vomiting

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Nausea is a feeling in the upper stomach of wanting to be sick or throw up (vomit). A patient will usually feel nauseous before vomiting, but may not always actually vomit.

Vomiting (being sick or throwing up) is emptying the contents of the stomach through the mouth. It may be voluntary or involuntary.

Nausea and vomiting are unpleasant for patients and can reduce their quality of life.

Ways to reduce nausea and vomiting

1. Take away any triggers, such as food, deodorants, air fresheners, perfumes and other strong-smelling items.
2. Make sure there is plenty of fresh air in the room. Use a fan or open a window.
3. Make sure the patient wears loose-fitting cool clothing.
4. Give frequent mouthwashes. Try ½ teaspoon baking soda and ½ teaspoon salt in 250ml water as a mouthwash. Or use a mouthwash such as Savacol™ or Listerine™.
5. If the patient can tolerate them, offer peppermints, sour candy, crystallized ginger, ice chips made from lemon or pineapple-based juice, or ginger ale.
6. Some patients may prefer peppermint or ginger tea, hot or iced, just as they like.
7. If the patient is still eating, offer small amounts of bland foods, fluids and snacks at room temperature.
8. When eating or drinking the patient should sit upright as much as possible.
9. Place a tissue dampened with drops of peppermint oil near the patient's pillow.
10. If the patient is nauseated, make sure a vomit container is close by.

Other ways to help reduce nausea

Guided imagery/visualisation

Encourages the patient to imagine they are in another place with pleasant associations for them. This can assist to block feelings of nausea.

Music Therapy

Play gentle music that the patient enjoys. This can relieve stress and anxiety and give a sense of well-being.

Distraction

Take the patient's mind off how bad they are feeling by chatting about pleasant family memories and routines. Play DVDs, or look at some photos.

Acupressure

Acupressure wristbands, such as those used to relieve travel sickness, may help. These are available from many pharmacies.