



# Vomiting & nausea



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Vomiting is the forcible emptying ("throwing up") of your stomach contents. When you vomit, your stomach muscles contract, which forces the contents of the stomach up through your esophagus and out your mouth. Dry heaves may precede or follow vomiting.

Nausea is the uncomfortable feeling you get in the back of your throat or the uneasiness in your stomach when you feel like you are going to throw up.

## PREVENTION

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before you prepare food, eat, and after you use the toilet.
- Eat well, exercise regularly, and get plenty of rest to keep your immune system strong.

## CAUSES

- Eating spoiled food
- Infections in the intestines
- Drinking too much alcohol
- A side effect of some medications
- Motion sickness. Morning sickness in pregnant females.
- Labyrinthitis. This is inflammation of an area in the ear. Often, a respiratory infection causes this.
- Migraine headaches
- Acute glaucoma
- Stomach ulcers
- A blockage in the intestines
- A concussion from a head injury
- Hepatitis
- Meningitis. This is inflammation of membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord.

## TRIAGE QUESTIONS

With vomiting, do you have any of these problems?

- Any heart attack warning signs
- One or more symptoms of meningitis
- Vomit red blood or material that looks like coffee grounds

NO

YES

► GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

With vomiting, do you have any of these problems?

- Sudden, severe pain in and around one eye, blurred vision, headache, and you see rainbow-colored halos around lights.
- Fainting or decreased level of consciousness
- A head or abdominal injury happened a short time ago.

NO

YES

► GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Do you have signs of dehydration?

NO

YES

► GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Do you have symptoms of a kidney infection?

NO

YES

► GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Does very bad stomach pain last for more than 2 hours, interfere with daily activities, and keep hurting even after you vomit?

NO

YES

► GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

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With vomiting, do the whites of your eyes or does your skin look yellow?

NO

YES ➔ SEE DOCTOR



With vomiting or nausea, do you have symptoms of a urinary tract infection?

NO

YES ➔ SEE DOCTOR



With nausea or vomiting, do you have ear pain or a feeling of fullness in an ear?

NO

YES ➔ CALL DOCTOR



In a baby or small child, has the vomiting lasted 2 to 6 hours? For others, has the vomiting lasted longer than 12 hours without getting better?

NO

YES ➔ CALL DOCTOR



Are you taking medicines that don't work if you vomit? High blood pressure pills are examples. Or, could you be pregnant?

NO

YES ➔ CALL DOCTOR



USE SELF-CARE



## SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

### Vomiting

- Don't smoke, drink alcohol, or take aspirin.
- Don't eat solid foods. Don't drink milk.
- Drink clear liquids at room temperature (not too hot or cold). Good examples are water; sport drinks, such as Gatorade; diluted fruit juices; ginger ale, etc. Take small sips. Drink only 1 to 2 ounces at a time. Stir carbonated beverages to get all the bubbles out before you sip them. Suck on ice chips if nothing else will stay down. **{Note:** For children, contact your child's doctor about using over-the-counter (OTC) mixtures, such as Pedialyte.}
- Gradually return to a regular diet, but wait about 8 hours from the last time you vomited. Start with foods like dry toast, crackers, rice, and other foods that are easy to digest. Or, eat foods as tolerated. Avoid greasy or fatty foods.

### Nausea Without Vomiting

- Rest
- Drink clear liquids slowly. Ice-cold drinks may help. Eat small amounts of light, dry foods, such as soda crackers, if they help.
- Don't mix hot and cold foods together.
- Avoid brushing your teeth after eating.
- Avoid things that irritate the stomach, such as alcohol and aspirin.
- For motion sickness, use an over-the-counter medicine, such as Dramamine. You could also try Sea-Bands, a wrist band product that uses acupressure on a certain point on the wrist to control motion sickness. Sporting goods stores and drugstores sell Sea-Bands.