

Coping with fever and nausea (feeling sick)



Cancer treatments can cause a range of side effects including nausea, vomiting, fever and infections. Here are some tips for coping if you have any of these problems.

Fever and infection

Fever and infection can be more common with chemotherapy than other treatments.

A fever can be a sign that your body has an infection and that something is wrong. Fevers can cause chills, shivering and headaches. It is important to find out the cause of the infection and get the right treatment. It is possible to have an infection without a fever—just to feel unwell.

During treatment for your cancer, the number of white blood cells (cells that fight infection) may be reduced. This will mean that your body is unable to fight infection in the usual way. The risk of infection is serious and the first sign of increased temperature or feeling generally unwell requires urgent medical attention.

A high temperature (38° or over) can be a sign that your body has an infection.

Do not wait to see what happens. It is important to contact your cancer treatment team or go to your nearest hospital emergency department immediately, and tell them you are receiving treatment for cancer.

He tohu pea te pāmahana teitei (nui ake i te 38°) kua puta he whakapokenga ki tō tinana. Tērā pea kei te rongo koe i te māuiui, te makariri, kei te tuawiri koe, kei te ānini rānei tō māhunga, hāunga te whai pāmahana nui. Kāua rawa e tatari kia kite koe kei te aha. Me whakapā wawe atu koe ki tō rōpū maimoa, me haere rānei ki te wāhi matepukupuku ohore o te hōhipera pātata ki a koe, ka kōrero atu kei te whai maimoa matepukupuku koe.

Remember that the risks of getting an infection and fever do not go away as soon as treatment ends. It is important for you to ask your treatment team about this.

Feeling sick (nausea) or vomiting

Not everyone feels sick or vomits after treatment. Medication is often given to prevent sickness occurring. It is easier to prevent sickness than to treat it once it has started. If you do feel sick you will find that it usually starts several hours after treatment.

If nausea or vomiting continues for longer than 24 hours or you are unable to hold down any fluids, contact your cancer treatment team. After hours – contact your cancer treatment team or go to your nearest emergency department or after-hours service.

If you are feeling sick here are some ideas to try:

- eat lightly before each treatment.
- eat smaller amounts more often.
- eat your main meal at the time of the day when you feel best.
- dry toast or crackers often helps.



- try drinking clear, cool drinks or sucking on ice cubes an hour or so after being sick.
- it may help to avoid alcohol and limit caffeine, milk products and
- high-fat foods.
- if cooking or cooking smells makes you feel sick, ask others to cook for you, or prepare meals between treatments and freeze them.



Don't do anything too strenuous after a meal, but try not to lie down for at least two hours after a meal.

Try breathing deeply through your mouth whenever you feel like being sick.

Some people find relaxation or meditation helps them to feel better.

Contact your local Cancer Society or phone the Cancer Information Helpline **0800 CANCER (226 237)** for advice on relaxation programmes or see our website www.cancernz.org.nz.



Tips

Remember to keep all medications out of the reach of children. Check with your doctor or nurse whether you can drive while on this medication.

Get plenty of rest. Some people find resting helps them feel less sick. Some anti-sickness medicines make you sleepy.

Relax and try to think about something else. Watch TV, listen to the radio or anything else that relaxes you.

Wear loose-fitting clothes. Tight clothes around the waist or neck, can make you feel sick.

Rinsing your mouth out can get rid of a bad taste. Try not eat strong or spicy foods.