



3. Definitions:

Nausea is an unpleasant feeling in the back of the throat and stomach that may or may not result in vomiting” (NCCN, 2004, pp. 5-6). Some terms that people use to describe nausea are “sick to my stomach,” “queasy,” or “butterflies.”

Vomiting is often confused with nausea, but it is in fact a separate symptom. Vomiting is a forceful contraction of the abdominal (stomach) muscles to cause stomach contents to come up through the mouth” (NCCN, 2004, p.7). It is frequently referred to as “throwing up.”

Retching is a “rhythmic and spasm-like contraction of the diaphragm and abdominal muscles. Retching is not the same as nausea and vomiting.” (American Cancer Society [ACS] and National Comprehensive Cancer Network, [NCCN], 2001, pp. 5-6).

Acute-onset nausea and vomiting “usually occur a few minutes to several hours after the chemotherapy is given and go away within the first 24 hours. The vomiting will be at its worst usually after 5 or 6 hours” (ACS and NCCN, 2004, p. 7).

Delayed-onset vomiting occurs > 24 hours after chemotherapy. With some chemotherapy regimes it may last 6 to 7 days (ACS and NCCN, 2004).

Anticipatory nausea and vomiting are learned from previous experiences or associations (ACS and NCCN, 2001).

Breakthrough vomiting occurs despite prophylactic treatment and requires additional therapy (ACS and NCCN, 2004).

Refractory vomiting is when the person has become “refractory” (no longer responding) to treatment to prevent nausea and vomiting and may occur after one, a few, or several chemotherapy treatments despite prophylactic treatment (ACS and NCCN, 2004).

American Cancer Society and National Comprehensive Cancer Network. (2004). Nausea and vomiting treatment guidelines for patients with cancer. Retrieved July 23, 2004, from [Nausea and Vomiting Treatment Guidelines for Patients with Cancer](#)