Tips for Dealing With Ovarian Cancer Nausea

by KRYSTINA OSTERMEYER

Coping With Ovarian Cancer Nausea

Typical symptoms of ovarian cancer, when present, include abdominal bloating with an increase in girth, indigestion, nausea, appetite changes, pelvic pressure, urinary frequency, lethargy, and a change in bowel movements. Symptoms are typically not present in the early stages of ovarian cancer.

Nausea can be debilitating. Below we've outlined some strategies for coping with this common symptom.

Lifestyle Modifications

Dietary Changes

- Eating small meals throughout the day allows the stomach to stay active
- Consume bland foods, such as toast and crackers
- Foods eaten cold or room temperature, rather than hot, decrease the odor of the food
- Avoid foods with a strong taste, such as very spicy and very sweet foods
- If taking in foods becomes a problem, try to consume foods that are high in calories — this will allow you to take in less food to obtain your calorie needs
- Clear liquids are often more palatable; examples of clear liquids include broths, teas, Popsicles and Jell-O
- Sucking on hard candies is calming and produces saliva, which may help control nausea

Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is the use of scents to treat a symptom or a problem. Specific scents are known to treatment specific problems.

Lavender and peppermint are both known to be beneficial for nausea treatment. Lavender has a calming effect, whereas peppermint is cooling — the two together can stop spasms in the GI tract. These scents can be diffused into the air or consumed as hard candies.

On a smaller scale, just the act of smelling a familiar, "happy" smell can help with nausea. For example, if the smell of fresh cut grass brings back a happy memory, that may be enough to override the feelings of nausea.

Ginger

Ginger has long been used to treat nausea. It can be taken as a supplement, consumed with foods, or drank as a tea or as a soda. Ginger also has the added benefit of being an anti-inflammatory agent.

Prescription Medications

When lifestyle modifications are not enough in treating nausea, sometimes prescription medications are necessary.

Medication examples include Dramamine, promethazine, prochlorperazine, ondansetron, and aprepritant. Most of these medications are given orally and are used to treat the symptoms of nausea.

There are also intravenous formulations of some of these medications that can be given prior to chemotherapy or if the nausea gets severe.

Medical marijuana is also an option in some states. There are also man-made versions of marijuana that sometimes work when other medications do not, such as drobabinol (Marinol) and nabilone (Cesamet).

The downside to prescription medications is that they often have unwanted side effects: often they cause sleepiness or confusion. Some may have GI side effects, such as diarrhea or constipation. Others may cause headaches. It is best to weigh the pros and cons of the medication with your doctor.

When to Call the Doctor About Your Ovarian Cancer Nausea

The problem with nausea and vomiting is that it can lead to dehydration. If you've treated your nausea using lifestyle modifications and/or prescription medication and are worried about dehydration, you should be in contact with your doctor.

In addition, you should contact your doctor if you note the following symptoms:

- Excessive vomiting (vomiting more than three times in an hour for three or more hours)
- Very dark urine and/or urinating with less frequency
- A weight loss of more than two pounds in one to two days
- Vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds