



ANESTHESIA & SEDATION

Post Anesthesia Nausea and Vomiting (PONV)

What exactly are nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is the feeling you experience when you're about to vomit. Vomiting is the act of actually throwing up. These two events can occur simultaneously. But sometimes people experience nausea without vomiting.

Some patients have nausea and vomiting following surgery. The medical term for this is "postoperative nausea and vomiting."

Even though it is typically not life-threatening, it can nevertheless be unpleasant. However, there are techniques to prevent this and treat it if it occurs.

What causes postoperative nausea and vomiting?

The most prevalent reason is general anesthesia. The medical term "anesthesia" refers to several medications administered to patients prior to surgery or other procedures. General anesthesia makes you unconscious so that you cannot feel, see, or hear anything during the operation.

Does everyone who undergoes surgery under general anesthetic experience nausea or vomiting?

No. You are more likely to experience nausea and vomiting after surgery if you:

- Had nausea or vomiting before your surgery
- Are female
- Are less than 50 years old; Have had nausea and vomiting after surgery in the past
- Have had motion sickness in the past
- Receive certain types of anesthesia medicines
- Receive certain pain medicines after surgery

Can nausea and vomiting after surgery cause complications?

Sometimes. Generally, it resolves on its own or with treatment. In certain instances, though, it can create issues, such as dehydration, which occurs when the body loses too much water.

Taking medication to prevent or treat nausea and vomiting can avoid these issues.

Can vomiting and nausea be prevented?

Yes. After surgery, doctors can take steps to reduce the risk of nausea and vomiting. These might consist of:

- Using regional anesthetic - This type of anesthesia numbs a specific section of the body, such as an arm, a leg, or the lower half of the body. Rather than putting you to sleep with a general anesthetic, several procedures can be performed in this manner. Regional anesthetic reduces the likelihood of nausea and vomiting in comparison to general anesthesia.
- Avoiding specific pain medications - Those who receive "opioid" painkillers after surgery are more prone to have nausea and vomiting. Your doctor can provide you with additional painkillers before, during, and after surgery.
- Preventing nausea and vomiting with medication - There are numerous medications that can help avoid nausea and vomiting. These are known as antiemetics. Medicines are administered by an intravenous (IV) line or orally. Your physician can administer these medications before, during, or after surgery.
- Before undergoing surgery, your physician will discuss your risk tolerance and preferences. You will determine together whether any of the aforementioned measures should be taken to prevent nausea and vomiting.

How can vomiting and nausea be treated?

If you suffer from nausea and vomiting, your doctor might prescribe you medication to alleviate your symptoms. These medications are identical to those used to prevent nausea and vomiting. But there are numerous medications in this category. If the previous medications did not work or have worn off, your physician can prescribe you new ones.

How long do nausea and vomiting remain following surgery?

It depends. Most people who have nausea and vomiting after surgery feel better within 24 hours.