

Understanding Heartburn During Cancer Treatment

What is heartburn?

Heartburn is a burning feeling in the stomach or lower chest that rises toward the neck and sometimes to the back.

If you are taking heartburn medication:

- Check with your healthcare team to see if you can continue, as these medicines may interact with your cancer treatment.
- Common heartburn medicines include:
 - Proton pump inhibitors (PPI): omeprazole, esomeprazole, lansoprazole
 - Histamine 2 (H2) blockers: famotidine, ranitidine
 - Antacids: calcium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate

Managing heartburn without medication:

- Avoid foods like chocolate, spicy foods, high-fat foods, carbonated drinks, and peppermint.
- Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine.
- Lose weight if you have gained recently or are overweight or obese.
- Raise your head and shoulders in bed for relief at night or when lying down.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes.

Medication tips:

- Your care team may give you medicines to reduce heartburn.
- Take these medicines exactly as they tell you.
- You might need to take your heartburn medicine and cancer medicine at different times.
- If you cannot stop your heartburn meds and are taking medicines that interact, your team may suggest drinking 8–12 ounces of seltzer water or club soda with your cancer medicine to help absorption.

Call your care team if you experience:

- Severe or new heartburn
- Bloody or black stools
- Persistent vomiting
- Unexpected weight loss
- Trouble swallowing

Notes

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Important notice: The Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), Network for Collaborative Oncology Development & Advancement, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources.

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