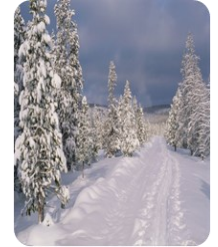




Northern Health Palliative Care

MANAGING NAUSEA AND VOMITING



Studies report that between 40-60% of palliative clients experience nausea (Downing, 2006), and it is estimated that half of these have vomiting as well.

Common Causes of Nausea in Palliative Care

High CNS Causes:

- Anxiety; Individuals with low threshold/ tolerance or smells/sights etc.
- Anticipatory nausea

Vestibular Causes:

- Motion
- Damage to Vestibular Structures

Chemoreceptor Trigger Zone:

- Toxins— infections, radiation
- Drugs—opioids, chemotherapy, digitalis

Intracranial:

- Increased Intracranial Pressure -Tumor or CVA

Gastric Irritation:

- Chemical— blood, antibiotics, drugs
- Physical—steroids, ASA, tumour, ulcer
- Distension—overeating, stasis, pressure, obstruction

What To Do:

1. Assess the Symptom using: **OPQRSTUV**
2. Try to determine the cause of the nausea. If reversible, treat the cause.
3. Come up with an individualized treatment plan.

Non Pharmacological Interventions

1. Maintain good oral hygiene.
2. Modify environment and diet.
3. Visualization/hypnosis/distraction.
4. Acupuncture.
5. Refer to counselling, social work or spiritual care for psychosocial care and anxiety reduction.

Base Pharmacological Management on the Suspected Cause:

High CNS

- Benzodiazepine & Cannabinoid

Vestibular Causes

- Histamine Antagonist - Dimenhydrinate, Methotrimeprazine
- Anticholinergics - Scopolamine, Atropine

Chemoreceptor Trigger Zone (CTZ)

- Dopamine Antagonist - Haloperidol, Methotrimeprazine
- Serotonin Antagonist - Metoclopramide, Ondansetron

Increased Intracranial Pressure

- Corticosteroid - Dexamethasone

GI Tract -Vagal

- Dopamine (D2) Antagonists Metoclopramide, Domperidone
- Serotonin (5HT3, 5HT4) Antagonists Metoclopramide and Ondansetron
- Others - Octreotide, Dexamethasone

(see symptom guidelines for recommended doses)

References

- Downing M, Wainwright W. (2002) Victoria Hospice Society. Medical Care of the Dying. 4th ed. pg 605-639.
- Northern Health (2008) Hospice Palliative Care Symptom Guide-

