Feeling Queasy? Help is Easy

Try teas, bands, needles or weed

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Oye of churning stomach; Help is on the horizon. Whether the culprit's a heavy AIDS drug or a digestive disorder, nausea can be nasty.

Sure, you can get Compazine, Tigan, Marinol, Kytril, Zofrn, Phenergan or Reglan, but these drugs tend to leave you drowsy, require a prescription and can be expensive.

So what to do? Aside from drinking a clear, carbonated beverage, you might try steeping some tea, getting acupuncture, massaging yourself, wearing special rubber bands or smoking a joint.

"Ginger tea is an extremely effective treatment for nausea," says Dr. Misha Cohen, research director of the Quan Yin Healing Arts Center in San Francisco and author of *The Chinese Way to Healing: Many Paths to Wholeness* (Berkley-Putnam/New York City). Cohen suggests boiling two or three thin slices of fresh ginger root for 10 minutes in a cup of water. Or take a quarter-teaspoon of ground dried ginger root in warm water, especially if nausea occurs with eating. Avoid ginger if you're experiencing burning sensations in your stomach.

Cohen says peppermint tea also works well. And Chicago herbalist Sue Saltmarsh recommends fennel tea and catnip tea. Catnip also works as an appetite stimulant and "is very soothing to the digestive tract," Saltmarsh says. Her rules for medicinal tea: Use boiling water, steep covered for at least 10 minutes, and don't add any sweetener.

How about taking "curing pills"-tiny beads of Chinese antinausea herbs sold in vials? A box costs $2 or $3. Cohen suggests taking half a vial two or three times a day for five days.

Something else to try: Place a wet washcloth on your stomach, a piece of grocery-bag plastic over that and a dry heating pad on top (or use a wet heating pad by itself).

Or try the acupressure point above your wrist: Measure up from the crease of your wrist on your inner arm with your three middle fingers. Massage the point in the middle with your thumb. This is where the rubber bands come in: Sea-Band is the brand name of an elastic bracelet designed for travel sickness. It has a small plastic ball that fits over the nausea acupressure point. Most drugstores sell them for around $11.

How about acupuncture? “Acupuncture can control and minimize nausea and other gastrointestinal symptoms for several days to a week,” Dion Richetti, medical director of Chicago’s AIDS Alternative Health Project, says.

And then there’s the “evil weed.” Dr. Donald Abrams, assistant director of the AIDS Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital, says, “Many of our providers find that marijuana works for nausea and other symptoms-which isn’t surprising, since Marinol (a synthetic drug form of an active ingredient in marijuana) is approved to treat nausea in cancer chemotherapy patients.” So for those with suffering stomachs, it may pay to inhale.

Any self-medication for serious or persistent conditions should be done in consultation with a qualified health practitioner.

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