

45 Nausea, Vomiting, and Indigestion

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Nausea is the feeling of a need to vomit. *Vomiting* (emesis) is the oral expulsion of gastrointestinal contents resulting from gut and thoracoabdominal wall contractions. Vomiting is contrasted with *regurgitation*, the effortless passage of gastric contents into the mouth. *Rumination* is the repeated regurgitation of food residue, which may be rechewed and reswallowed. In contrast to emesis, these phenomena exhibit volitional control. *Indigestion* encompasses a range of complaints including nausea, vomiting, heartburn, regurgitation, and dyspepsia (symptoms thought to originate in the gastroduodenal region). Some individuals with dyspepsia experience postprandial fullness, early satiety (inability to complete a meal due to premature fullness), bloating, eructation (belching), and anorexia. Others report predominantly epigastric burning or pain. Nausea, vomiting, and dyspepsia have been correlated with a condition now called avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder.

NAUSEA AND VOMITING

■ MECHANISMS

Vomiting is coordinated by the brainstem and is effected by responses in the gut, pharynx, and somatic musculature. Mechanisms underlying nausea are poorly understood but likely involve the cerebral cortex, as nausea requires cognitive and emotional input and is associated with autonomic responses including diaphoresis, pallor, and altered heart rate. Functional brain imaging studies support this idea showing activation of cerebral regions including the insula, anterior cingulate cortex, and amygdala during nausea.

Coordination of Emesis Brainstem nuclei—including the nucleus tractus solitarius; dorsal vagal and phrenic nuclei; medullary nuclei