

Understanding Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome (CVS)



Cyclic vomiting syndrome (CVS) is an uncommon health problem in adults. It occurs when you have sudden, recurring episodes or attacks of vomiting. The attacks may occur over a period of a few days or weeks. In between the episodes, you are otherwise healthy. You may have CVS for months to years.

What causes cyclic vomiting syndrome

Researchers don't know the exact cause of CVS. It may be linked to problems with the digestive system or other parts of the body. It may also be genetic. People with the condition often have migraines or a family history of them.

Symptoms of cyclic vomiting syndrome

The main symptom of CVS is sudden, recurring episodes of vomiting. They may occur several times a month or several times a year. The episodes follow a similar pattern every time you have them. They tend to start at the same time and last about the same amount of time (hours to days). The pattern is unique to you. Between episodes, you won't have any nausea or vomiting.

You may have these other symptoms during an attack:

- Stomach pain
- Heaving
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to light
- Sluggishness
- Diarrhea

Some people with CVS find that symptoms start after a certain trigger. Triggers may include stress, a lack of sleep, substance use, an infection, and certain foods like chocolate or cheese. In women, the syndrome may happen at the same time as their menstrual period.

Treatment for cyclic vomiting syndrome

Treatment for CVS may include:

- **Medicines.** Certain medicines may help stop vomiting and nausea. You may need to take them regularly to prevent an attack. Or you may take them to stop or ease an episode once it has started. Medicines include those used to treat migraines and depression, antihistamines, antiemetics, and some seizure medicines. Some supplements such as CoQ10 are also advised. But check with your provider before starting any herbals or supplements.
- **Supportive care.** You may need to stay in the hospital if you have a severe case of CVS. This is to help treat or prevent dehydration. You may need intravenous (IV) fluids. Pain relievers may help with stomach pain.
- **Lifestyle changes.** Trying to stay away from triggers such as stress or certain foods may help prevent symptoms. Meditation, relaxation, mindfulness, and biofeedback may help. A similar syndrome from

cannabis use exists. Not using cannabis helps prevent symptoms in this type of cyclic vomiting syndrome.

Possible complications of cyclic vomiting syndrome

- Dehydration
- Irritated or damaged esophagus
- Tooth decay
- Migraine headaches

Call 911

Call 911 if any of these occur:

- Trouble breathing
- Confusion
- Drowsiness or trouble waking up
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Rapid heart rate
- Chest pain

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider or seek medical care right away if you have any of these:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Continued vomiting (unable to keep liquids down) for 24 hours
- Less urine than usual or extreme thirst
- Pain that gets worse
- Symptoms that don't get better, or get worse
- New symptoms

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