

Understanding and Working Through Emetophobia

SPECIFIC PHOBIA OF VOMITING · PSYCHOEDUCATION AND WORKSHEET

A fear of vomiting is more common than many people realise, and it can improve with the right support

Emetophobia is an intense fear of vomiting, or of seeing others vomit. It often leads to careful habits that bring relief but can gradually take up more of life. This page helps you understand your pattern and plan small steps with your psychologist.

01 Understanding the pattern

a simplified picture



02 My pattern

short notes are fine

My triggers
Situations, sensations, thoughts or images

What I fear will happen
e.g. "I'll be sick and won't cope", "I'll lose control"

How strongly I believe this: ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

What this fear costs me
e.g. meals out, travel, time with others, work, plans

What I would do if the fear were smaller
Things that matter to me

03 Working through it

planned with your psychologist

1 Understand nausea Anxiety commonly causes nausea, and nausea usually passes without vomiting.	2 Ease safety habits Reduce checking and avoiding gradually, one habit at a time.	3 Face fears step by step Approach feared situations, words, images or sensations in planned steps.	4 Update the prediction Notice what happened compared with what the fear predicted.
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A A smaller first step Expected distress (0–10): _____	B A next step Expected distress (0–10): _____	C A step for later Expected distress (0–10): _____
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After trying a step, how strongly I believe the fear: ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 What I learned: _____

To bring to my next session: _____

i If you have been eating much less, losing weight, or have ongoing nausea or stomach symptoms, please speak with your GP as well as your psychologist. Only practise steps that are safe for you, and never try to make yourself sick.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

Research on emetophobia is still limited and mostly small in scale. CBT with graded exposure has the most support so far, including one small randomised trial (Keyes et al., 2018). Safety behaviours around food and illness are common (Veale & Lambrou, 2006), and gently approaching sensations such as nausea may help (Hunter & Antony, 2009). This page is informed by these approaches but is not a treatment in itself.

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

Reflecting on fears can bring up strong feelings. You can pause, stop, choose a different section, or return to this later. If you become significantly distressed, consider speaking with your psychologist or another appropriate professional.

SOURCES

Hunter, P. V., & Antony, M. M. (2009). Cognitive-behavioral treatment of emetophobia: The role of interoceptive exposure. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 16, 84–91.

Keyes, A., Gilpin, H. R., & Veale, D. (2018). Phenomenology, epidemiology, co-morbidity and treatment of a specific phobia of vomiting: A systematic review of an understudied disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 60, 15–31.

Veale, D., & Lambrou, C. (2006). The psychopathology of vomit phobia. *Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy*, 34, 139–150.