



A guide to...

Nausea and Vomiting in pregnancy

Patient Information

How to contact us

Nutrition and Dietetics Department
Sycamore House
Watford General Hospital
60 Vicarage Road
Hertfordshire WD18 0HB
Tel: 01923 436 236

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| Author | Diana David |
| Department | Nutrition & Dietetics |
| Ratified / Review Date | Sept 2023 / Sept 2026 |
| ID Number | 34-2217-V1 |



Nausea and vomiting, commonly known as 'morning' sickness, is an unpleasant occurrence during pregnancy, which can significantly affect your day-to-day life. Nearly 80% of pregnant women experience these symptoms, but in the majority of cases, they usually improve by weeks 16 to 20 of your pregnancy and does not put your baby at any increased risk.

Treatment at home

It may be necessary to use medicines to prevent the retching and vomiting. Only certain types of medications are used, and these have been selected carefully by the obstetrician to be the safest available for you and your baby.

However, there are some steps that you can also take from the comfort of your own home:

- **Staying hydrated** - Dehydration can make nausea and vomiting worse. Have small sips of fluids at a time (e.g., 10-15 minutes) and gradually increase the amount you take. You can also suck on ice chips or lollies and introduce flavoured drinks later on to make drinks a bit more interesting (e.g., cold lemonade, dilute squash, tonic water). It is far more important to have an adequate fluid intake, even if you cannot eat.
- **Try dry and starchy foods** - When you feel able to try some food, dry and starchy foods are a good place to start and recommended to be eaten slowly.
- **Incorporate protein in your meals** - Protein foods (e.g., meat, fish, pulses, eggs) have been found to help with reducing nausea.
- **Little and often eating pattern** - Consuming smaller and more frequent meals throughout the day can help prevent your stomach from becoming too full, which may trigger nausea.
- **Try not to eat and drink at the same time** - have a meal and wait half-an-hour before drinking anything.
- **Take time over your meals** – Do not rush when you eat and rest afterwards.
- **Avoid triggers** - Pay attention to foods or smells that seem to worsen your symptoms and try to avoid them. Keeping a food diary may be helpful to track your symptoms and identify any patterns. Blander foods can also have less of a smell (e.g., crackers, toast, boiled potatoes, and plain rice).
- **Try ginger** - Ginger is known for its anti-nausea properties, try consuming ginger in various forms, such as ginger tea, ginger candies, ginger ale, or ginger extract.

Hyperemesis in pregnancy

Hyperemesis gravidarum refers to severe nausea and vomiting in pregnancy and sometimes requires hospitalisation.

It is advised that you to get in touch with your doctor or midwife if you present at least one of any of the following symptoms:

- Inability to keep any food or fluid down for 24 hours
- Inability to keep down oral antiemetics (anti-sickness medications)
- Continued nausea and vomiting, associated with ketonuria (high levels of ketones) and/or weight loss (greater than 5% of body weight), despite oral antiemetics
- Dark-coloured urine or inability to pass urine for more than 8 hours
- Severe dizziness or weakness

Hospital treatments may include:

- Pharmacological antiemetics - Combinations of different drugs may be used if you do not respond to a single antiemetic.
- Intravenous fluids - Fluids will need to be given intravenously (into your veins) to prevent dehydration. If this is needed, you will require a short time in hospital so that you can be monitored.

When you feel better

Continue to take it fairly easy for a while. If you overdo things and exhaust yourself, your symptoms may come back again the next day. Once the nausea has passed (and in most cases it will) eat a sensible, well-balanced diet and enjoy your pregnancy!

Smoking

If you smoke, stopping smoking can help relieve your symptoms, as well as improving the health of you and your baby.