

Your important health information

Dietary suggestions for managing nausea and vomiting in pregnancy

Nausea and vomiting are very common in pregnancy. It can occur at any time of the day and your symptoms may vary during your pregnancy. In fact, your symptoms may even vary with each pregnancy.

What causes nausea and vomiting in pregnancy?

The cause is unknown although it has been linked to changes in hormone levels.

Hyperemesis

A small number of women suffer with severe nausea and vomiting called *hyperemesis gravidarum* or hyperemesis. If not treated, this can lead to dehydration and weight loss. It can also impact on your daily life activities. It is important to see your doctor if symptoms are severe. A small amount of weight loss of a few kilograms is not likely to harm your baby.

If vomiting and weight loss continues your dietitian may recommend a high energy diet and supplements to help prevent further weight loss. Dietitians can also provide you with individual advice to help you meet your nutritional needs.

When can nausea and vomiting in pregnancy be a problem?

Ongoing nausea and vomiting may lead to dehydration. It can also prevent you from eating a diet that is sufficient in energy and nutrients.

Some hints to help manage nausea and vomiting

Drink enough to prevent dehydration

- Drink small amounts often.
- Try Hydralyte, Lucozade, sports drinks such as Gatorade, cordial, diluted fruit juice, weak tea and clear soup such as Bonox. These may be better tolerated than water.
- Suck on icy poles or try eating jelly if other fluids cannot be managed.
- Some people find ginger helps relieve nausea. Try ginger ale, tea or tablets.

Suggestions that may help to reduce the severity of your symptoms

- Try to relax at meal times. Eat slowly and chew food well.
- Eat small amounts of food more often, rather than large meals.
- Drink fluids separate from your meals.
- Avoid having an empty stomach. Try to eat small amounts every two to three hours.
- Early morning nausea may be helped by eating a dry or plain biscuit before getting out of bed.
- Try not to move suddenly, for example rise from bed slowly.
- Salty foods, such as dry biscuits or rice crackers may help.
- Eat whenever you are hungry and want to eat. Don't wait for the next meal as this feeling may not last.

- Try not to eat foods with strong smells. Eating food at room temperature or cold foods can help. Remember to not eat the 'at risk' listeria foods like cold meats, soft cheeses or left-overs that are cold or more than 24 hours old.
- If possible, avoid cooking and ask for help from friends and family.
- Try not to eat fatty, fried or spicy foods like take-away, cakes, curries and hot chips.
- Try sucking on barley sugar or boiled sweets.
- Avoid smoking. This can make your nausea worse and cause harm to your baby.
- Do not stop eating foods that you like to eat. Eat foods that you like and avoid those that you do not like.

Some foods to try

- Dry or plain biscuits
- Toast with honey or jam
- Sandwiches with low fat fillings
- Low fat soups
- Fresh or stewed fruit
- Ice cream, custard or yoghurt
- Grilled, steamed or baked lean meat, chicken or fish
- Boiled or scrambled eggs
- Boiled rice, pasta or noodles
- Mashed potato.

Vitamins and pharmacological therapies

Your midwife, doctor or dietitian may advise you to take vitamin supplements during your pregnancy. If you are having trouble taking your supplements, speak with your midwife, doctor or pharmacist about if you need to stop or change your dose. Women should aim to continue folic acid supplements in the first trimester and iodine throughout the pregnancy.

There are some over the counter medications that are safe and can help treat nausea and vomiting. Pyridoxine 25mg (Vitamin B6) can be taken three times a day. Please discuss with your doctor or midwife if symptoms continue. You may also be given anti-nausea medication by your doctor in severe cases.

Alternative therapies

There has been no consistent benefit found in the use of alternative therapies, such as acupuncture, acupressure (sea bands) or hypnotherapy. However some women find these treatments useful. These treatments are not offered by the hospital. Your midwife or doctor however may be able to provide you with more information.

If you are unable to keep down any food or fluids for over 12 hours attend your local Emergency Department.

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Dietitian

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