



NAUSEA AND VOMITING DURING PREGNANCY

Does Every Woman Experience Nausea or Vomiting During Pregnancy?

A few lucky women do not have nausea or vomiting during pregnancy. About one in four pregnant women have only mild nausea. Three in every ten pregnant women have nausea severe enough to affect their daily lives. One half of all pregnant women experience both nausea and vomiting during the first months of pregnancy. Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy tends to be the worst 8 to 10 weeks after your last menstrual period. It usually goes away by 12 to 16 weeks after your last period. It is often called “morning sickness,” but it can occur all day long.

What Causes Nausea and Vomiting During Pregnancy?

We do not know for sure what causes nausea and vomiting during pregnancy. Changes in hormone levels play a role. If your mother had morning sickness when she was pregnant, you may be more likely to have nausea and vomiting during pregnancy. A history of motion sickness or stomach problems before you got pregnant may be another risk factor.

Are Nausea and Vomiting During Pregnancy Dangerous?

Mild to moderate nausea and vomiting may make you feel awful, but it will not hurt you or your baby. Severe vomiting during pregnancy—that prevents you from keeping any food down—is called hyperemesis gravidarum. It is rare, but can cause health problems. You should call your health care provider if any of the following apply to you:

- You are not able to keep any liquids or foods down for 24 hours
- You are vomiting several times a day or after every meal
- You have abdominal pain, difficulty urinating, or you have a fever

How are Nausea and Vomiting Treated?

Nausea or vomiting during pregnancy is treated in three easy steps:

1. Simple diet changes may lessen nausea and help you avoid vomiting. This is all it takes for many women.
2. If diet changes are not enough, you can try taking ginger or using acupressure bands. Both have been shown to decrease nausea.
3. Finally, if the nausea and vomiting are making it hard to do your usual activities, medications can be prescribed. Please check with your health care provider before taking any medicine.

Are Antinausea Medications Dangerous for my Baby?

There are several different types of nausea medicines that work well and are safe for you and your baby. Because nausea and vomiting can be caused by different “triggers” in your body, you and your health care provider should work together to find the medicine that is right for you.

TIPS TO TREAT NAUSEA AND VOMITING DURING PREGNANCY

First Step: Lifestyle and Diet Changes

- Nausea during pregnancy is worse if you are dehydrated (if there is not enough fluid in your body) or if the levels of sugar in your blood are low from not eating often enough.
- Eat plain crackers or dry toast in the morning before getting out of bed and at any time during the day when you feel nauseous.
- Instead of three large meals, eat small meals every 2 to 3 hours.
- Avoid foods that have strong odors.
- Sucking on a lemon or lime slice may help.
- Try eating foods that are high in carbohydrates, such as potatoes, noodles, or toast.
- Do not lie down right after eating.
- Try drinking carbonated beverages between meals; wait for 30 minutes after eating to drink liquids.
- Dairy products may make nausea and vomiting worse, but some women say yogurt is helpful.
- Avoid foods that are greasy, fried, spicy, or very hot.
- Some women find that prenatal vitamins make their nausea worse. If so, check with your health care provider about stopping the vitamins until the nausea goes away. If you stop taking a prenatal multivitamin, you should take one tablet of folic acid daily (0.4 mg, which is 400 micrograms per day) during the first trimester. Folic acid tablets will not worsen nausea.

Second Step: Nonmedication Treatment

Ginger

Ginger has been used for treating nausea since ancient times. Ginger root tea, ginger gum, ginger snaps, ginger syrup added to water, and ginger ale are all safe, and can decrease the severity of your nausea. You can also buy ginger capsules at a drug store. The dose of ginger that has been tested is 1 gram (250 mg capsules powdered ginger taken four times per day). Ginger capsules come in several doses. If you want to use ginger capsules, ask your health care provider how often you should take them.

Acupressure Bands

Seabands are wristbands with a pressure point placed on the inside of your wrist. They are often used for motion sickness. Some women find them helpful for their nausea, and they are safe.

Third Step: Medication

There are over-the-counter and prescription medicines that can be used if your nausea and vomiting are very severe. Talk with your health care provider before taking any additional vitamins or medicines.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NAUSEA AND VOMITING

Motherisk Nausea and Vomiting HelpLine

(800) 436-8477

<http://www.motherisk.org/women/morningSickness.jsp>

The Motherisk HelpLine and Web site are staffed by counselors who are specially trained in helping you with questions about nausea, vomiting, and safety of medications.

SOS Morning Sickness

<http://www.sosmorningsickness.com/>

This Web site has extensive information on nausea and vomiting.

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