

EATING WELL WITH NAUSEA & VOMITING IN PREGNANCY



Mercy Health
Care first

Nausea and vomiting (Morning sickness) are very common in pregnancy. It can occur at any time of the day and symptoms may vary throughout pregnancy. This sheet will provide dietary suggestions to help manage nausea during pregnancy.

General Information

The causes of Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy are still unknown.

Symptoms usually improve by week 12 and stop by week 20. A small number of women suffer with severe and persistent nausea and vomiting called hyperemesis gravidarum (Hyperemesis).

It is important to see your doctor if symptoms are severe.

When can nausea and vomiting in pregnancy be a problem?

Ongoing nausea and vomiting may lead to:

- Dehydration.
- Not eating a diet that is sufficient in energy and nutrients.
- Weight loss. A few kilograms of weight loss is unlikely to harm your baby, however if this continues your dietitian may recommend a high energy diet and supplements to ensure there's enough nutrition for you and your baby. Dietitians can also provide you with individual advice to help you meet your nutritional needs.
- Excessive saliva: spitting out excess saliva can worsen dehydration. Ask your GP for some relief medication and carry a spit cup or cloth with you to get rid of the saliva without swallowing.

Some hints to help manage nausea and vomiting

Drink enough to prevent dehydration

- Drink small amounts of fluid often. It may be helpful to drink fluids separate from your meals.
- Some drinks might be better tolerated than plain water. Try Hydralyte, Lucozade, sports drinks such as Gatorade, flavoured or protein waters, cordial, diluted fruit juice, weak tea or clear soups such as Bonox.
- Suck on ice cubes, icy poles or try eating jelly if other fluids cannot be managed.
- Ginger might help to relieve nausea. Try ginger ale or tea.

Suggestions that may help increase intake (choose those that suit you)

- Try to relax at meal times. Eat slowly and chew foods well.
- Avoid having an empty stomach by eating small amounts of food 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.
- Make the most of the best time of your day - when there is less nausea and more hunger - and eat well.
- Do not restrict foods unnecessarily or wait for the next meal as this feeling may not last.
- Cold or room temperature foods may be better tolerated if food smells make you feel unwell. However, avoid eating cold meats, soft cheeses or left-overs that are cold or more than 24 hours old, as it may contain harmful bacteria.
- If possible, avoid cooking and ask for help from friends and family.

- Limit fatty, rich, fried or spicy foods like takeaway meals, cakes, curries and hot chips.
- **If you are eating less than usual:** add energy (calories) to your meals by adding avocado, olive oil, nut butters, cheese, butter, margarine, milk or nutritional supplement prescribed by your Dietitian/GP if tolerating.
- Avoid smoking.
- As your symptoms settle, aim to eat enough from all food groups. This is important to replace the nutrients you may have been missing out on.
- For more information, please refer to the Mercy patient handout **Healthy eating in pregnancy:** <https://health-services.mercyhealth.com.au/patient-information-sheets>

Some foods to try

- Toast with honey or jam
- Boiled or scrambled eggs
- Boiled rice, pasta or noodles
- Baked beans
- Salty foods such as popcorn, dry biscuits or rice crackers
- Tofu
- Starchy vegetables for example, mashed potato
- Fresh, tinned, or stewed fruit
- Sandwiches (i.e. salad, vegemite or cheese)
- Soup or broth
- Ice cream (try low fat), custard or yoghurt
- Barley sugar or boiled sweets
- Grilled, steamed or baked lean meat, chicken or fish

Vitamin and herbal supplements for nausea and vomiting

Pyridoxine (vitamin B6) and ginger tablets are over the counter supplements which may reduce nausea. Your doctor can also suggest other prescription medications.

You should continue to take folic acid supplements in the first trimester and iodine throughout your pregnancy. If you are having trouble taking your supplements, speak with your midwife, doctor or pharmacist.

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.

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



For more information

If you have any questions or need further advice, please call us:

- Monday to Friday
- 8:00am to 4:30pm

Department: Dietetics

Mercy Hospital for Women

Phone: 03 8458 4165

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Phone: 03 8754 3150

In the event of an emergency, please dial **000** for an ambulance or go to your nearest Mercy Health or other hospital emergency department.