

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.

Hyperemesis

A small number of women suffer with severe nausea and vomiting called hyperemesis gravidarum. It is important to see your doctor if symptoms are severe.

A small amount of weight loss of a few kilograms is unlikely to harm your baby. If vomiting and weight loss continues your dietitian may recommend a high energy diet and supplements. 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 of fluid often. It may be helpful to drink fluids separate from your meals if you find you can't eat and drink at the same time.
- Some women find that other drinks are better tolerated than water. These may include 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.
- Some people find ginger helps 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.
- Try to 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.
- Eat whenever you are hungry and want to eat. 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. Avoid eating the foods which may contain harmful bacteria such as 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.

- Limit fatty, rich, fried or spicy foods like takeaway meals, cakes, curries and hot chips.
- 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 rice, pasta or noodles
- Salty foods such as popcorn, dry biscuits or rice crackers
- Starchy vegetables for example, mashed potato
- Sandwiches with low fat fillings for example, salad, vegemite, cheese
- Low fat soups
- Grilled, steamed or baked lean meat, chicken or fish
- Boiled or scrambled eggs
- Baked beans
- Tofu
- Fresh, tinned or stewed fruit
- Ice cream, custard or yoghurt
- Barley sugar or boiled sweets

Vitamin and herbal supplements for nausea and vomiting

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

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

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.

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

Further Information

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

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