

NAUSEA & VOMITING DURING PREGNANCY (NVP)

(Morning Sickness in Pregnancy)

It is common in the first three months of pregnancy and occurs in 50% to 80% of pregnant women. The symptoms often occur in the morning (from 6-9 am), but may occur at any time during the day. The impact and severity of the nausea and vomiting is different for each woman.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

It ranges from mild to severe nausea with or without vomiting. This is usually during the first 12 to 14 weeks of pregnancy. It may continue longer, and for a few women, last throughout pregnancy. By the end of the third month, most symptoms will resolve in majority of women. The symptoms are more severe in those with multiple pregnancy or molar pregnancy.

CAUSES

Exact causes of nausea and vomiting during pregnancy are unknown. Nausea may result from rising levels of human chorionic gonadotrophin in the blood or other hormonal changes that take place to permit normal growth of the fetus.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Do not let your stomach get empty; eat something every 2 hours if necessary and take frequent sips of fluid.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Hyperemesis gravidarum, which is a condition of pregnancy characterized by severe nausea, vomiting, weight loss and electrolyte disturbance (rare). This would require hospitalization for drips and medications.

TREATMENT

This is a list of some simple advice, which may help you cope better or reduce the severity of nausea and vomiting during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Lifestyle change

- Avoid loud, crowded places and too much activity.
- Avoid warm places and those with limited air flow.
- Avoid places and activities where smells are prominent, such as buses, subways, around smokers, around people changing diapers; use the exhaust fan in the kitchen or use the oven or microwave.
- Take vitamins at night and see if they can be tolerated better than in the morning. Children's vitamins are chewable and may be better tolerated. You may be able to take a folic acid supplement that is smaller.
- Brush teeth after meals instead of upon arising. Try fruit-flavored toothpaste.
- Get out of bed slowly (effectiveness may be due to similarity to motion sickness).
- Lie down and remain still when nauseated.
- Be aware of the effects of exercise since increased minutes of exercise have been correlated with increased nausea and vomiting.
- Avoid stress. Living with the constant or frequent threat of nausea and/or vomiting and/or retching is a stressor in itself.

Dietary instructions

- Try dry, bland food such as the BRAT diet (bananas, rice, apples, and toast).
- Avoid fat or spicy foods (fat stays in the stomach longer).
- Eat high-protein snacks.
- Snack before going to bed.
- Don't force self to eat and don't let others force you.
- Eat lots of little meals; don't let the stomach get empty.
- Drink liquids in a cup with a lid on if the smell is a trigger.
- Ginger ale may help but the ginger content varies widely between brands.
- Try foods that may not appeal but don't disgust you.
- Lemon in tea or water or just licking lemon slices may help.
- Try peppermint gum.
- Take advantage of good days or good hours of the day. Eat what you can when you feel like it.
- Cold foods have less odor and may be easier to swallow.

(Reference:

Mitzi Davis. Nausea and Vomiting of Pregnancy-An Evidence-based Review. J Perinat Neonat Nurs. 2004;18:312–328.)

- Keep a daily record of your weight.
- Medicine is usually not prescribed for this disorder, but if the symptoms are severe, your doctor may prescribe some medications for relief.
- A trial of vitamin B-6 may be recommended and may work for some women.
- Stop all pregnancy vitamin pills (except for folic acid) if it causes nausea. Ask your doctor for advise.
- Resting in a dark and quiet room provides some relief for most patients.
- Please see your doctor immediately if you continue to feel unwell or the symptoms becomes more severe such as :
 - You vomit blood or material that resembles coffee grounds.
 - Abdominal pain, cramping, or fever occurs.
 - Significant weight loss.
 - Unable to drink any fluids any all and associated with low or no urine output.

Disclaimer

This is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is important for readers to seek proper medical advice when necessary.

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