



Nausea and vomiting with pregnancy

Information for women, birthing people, and their families

Nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (being sick) are symptoms of pregnancy and affect most pregnant women / birthing people to some degree.

Although called “morning sickness”, it can happen at any time of the day or night.

What can cause ‘morning sickness’?

Hormonal changes in the first three months of pregnancy are the main cause of morning sickness.

How long can it last?

'Morning sickness' usually disappears around the 12th to 14th week of your pregnancy. Although in some pregnancies it may last longer.

What can I do to help my symptoms?

- If you feel sick first thing in the morning, give yourself time to get up slowly.
- If possible, eat something like dry toast or a plain biscuit before you get up.
- Stay hydrated. If you are unable to drink, try sipping fluids and crushed ice.
- Eat small amounts of food often. For example, eat a slice of toast, and then if you are feeling alright have a small bowl of pasta two hours later.
- Meals that are high in carbohydrates and low in fat, such as potato, rice and pasta, are easier to tolerate.
- Food containing ginger, such as ginger biscuits, can sometimes help.
- Avoid foods and smells that make you feel sick. It helps if someone else can cook if you feel sick.
- Get plenty of rest and sleep whenever you can. Feeling tired can make the sickness worse.

- Distract yourself as much as you can. Often the nausea gets worse the more you think about it.
- Wear comfortable clothes; tight waistbands can make you feel worse.

What if my symptoms continue?

If the above advice does not help, and you are still having morning sickness, please speak to your GP or midwife. They may be able to arrange for you to be seen by a member of the hospital's Maternity team.

What is hyperemesis gravidarum?

Hyperemesis gravidarum is a severe form of sickness. Some women / birthing people will suffer from this, however not all nausea and vomiting during pregnancy is hyperemesis gravidarum. It appears to be more common when it is your first pregnancy or if you are pregnant with twins.

Hyperemesis gravidarum can lead to dehydration and weight loss in pregnancy. If you do suffer from this form of morning sickness, you may need to stay in hospital overnight for treatment (see below).

What treatments may be offered to me in hospital?

- Treatment can include intravenous fluids, which are given directly into one of your veins through a drip. If you have severe vomiting, anti-sickness drugs may also need to be given through a vein or a muscle. You should feel much better after this, and be able to go home once your treatment is complete.
- You will be given anti-sickness tablets by the hospital to take home. If you feel better, you can cut down the number of tablets you are taking. **Do not do this until you have spoken to your midwife or GP.**

Most anti-sickness medications are safe to take during pregnancy. Your doctor or midwife will speak to about your medication before you start taking them, including any side effects you need to be aware of.

Do not to take any medication until you have spoken to your midwife or GP.

- If your vomiting gets worse, stop eating but try to keep sipping fluids and taking the anti-sickness tablets until you start to feel better. Please ask your GP for a repeat prescription before your tablets run out.
- When you arrive at hospital, the Maternity team will carry out some simple blood tests. If these tests show that you are dehydrated, and you have lost weight or you have a medical condition such as a heart, thyroid, or kidney problem, or diabetes, you may need to stay in hospital for treatment. You will discuss this with the Maternity team before any decisions are made.

Further help

Remember that you are not alone.

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy can be a difficult problem to cope with. It can be one of the most trying problems in early pregnancy. It can affect your mood and what tasks you are able to do, and make you feel tired and emotional.

If you ever feel you need extra support, please do not hesitate to ask for help. You can start by visiting our Pregnancy Sickness Support (<https://www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk>) website.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145 (tel://+441227783145), or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

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