

Nausea and Vomiting During Pregnancy

Nausea and vomiting, sometimes called morning sickness or hyperemesis, is a common complaint during the first 3 months of pregnancy. About 50 percent of all pregnant women have nausea; of these, about one-third experience vomiting. Hormone changes and altered digestion often are linked to nausea and vomiting. Below is some information to help you deal with this problem.

*Contact your
doctor or
nurse if
you are
losing weight
or cannot
eat anything.*

Food Selection

Sometimes the hardest part about nausea/vomiting is finding a food item that appeals to you. Are you craving any particular food item? Does anything sound like it may be good to eat? Think of the different food qualities and try to find one that appeals to you.

Salty	Dry	Spicy	Crunchy
Wet	Earthy	Sweet	Lumpy
Mushy	Bitter	Cold	Aromatic
Sour	Hot	Fizzy	Fruity

If nothing in particular sounds good, what foods do you have on hand? To give you some ideas, below is a list of foods and liquids that may reduce nausea:

Crackers	Juice bars/Popsicles®
Pretzels	Chilled orange sections
Dry cereal	Teas – raspberry, mint, chamomile, etc.
Dill pickles	Lemonade
Grapes	Coca-Cola®
Watermelon	Ginger ale

If there is nothing that appeals to you, try starting out with small sips of a liquid supplement or an instant breakfast product.

Although a balanced diet is extremely important during your pregnancy, right now the most important thing is to break the nausea/vomiting cycle. Tastes, cravings, nausea and vomiting will change throughout your pregnancy. Take it one day at a time. Try a few different foods each day.

You may need to start out with small, frequent feedings or meals. Small, in this case, may mean only 1 or 2 bites. Start with a few bites every 15 minutes. When this is working, try a few more bites every 30 minutes, then a few more bites every 45 minutes. In this way, slowly work your way to mini-meals every 2 hours.

In the beginning, liquids, especially “thin liquids” like water, may be a problem. Unless you crave a specific liquid, start your meal with a food item. However, don’t forget that liquid intake is important! To boost your liquid intake, try ice chips or frozen juice bars. Sometimes, a sour liquid like lemonade or a “flat” soda seems to stay down. You need to experiment to see what works best for you.

Triggers

Another important way to ease nausea and vomiting is to identify those things that may trigger this problem. Here is a list of common triggers and some suggested ways to deal with them.

TRIGGERS	SOLUTIONS
Heightened Sense of Smell	Remove or avoid bothersome odors. Strong cleaning agents, heavy perfumes and cigarette smoke are some examples. If you can’t remove the odor, put a fan on, open a window or leave the room. Carry a fresh lemon or fresh mint with you to mask the offensive odor. Sip drinks through a straw or from a cup with a lid. If the smell of hot foods bothers you, eat cold foods: sandwiches, main meal salads, cheese and crackers, etc. If you can’t stand the aroma of the food you’ve just cooked, eat something else.

TRIGGERS	SOLUTIONS
Empty Stomach	<p>Don't let your stomach get empty. If you wait until you feel hungry, it can be too late.</p> <p>Eat small, frequent meals.</p> <p>Carry snacks with you that don't need to be refrigerated: peanut butter crackers, cheese crackers, raisins, dry cereal, etc.</p> <p>Have a snack before you go to bed at night, as you should never go longer than 10 hours over the night without eating.</p>
Fatigue	Get plenty of rest.
Stress	Try to reduce your stress by doing away with unnecessary tasks. Enlist help or spend 15 to 30 minutes a day relaxing. Light exercise, such as walking, may help ease tension.
Sudden Movement	Try to wake up to soothing music instead of a jarring alarm. Let your stomach settle before you get out of bed. Sometimes it helps to eat saltines before you get out of bed.
Vitamins	If vitamins really upset you, talk with your doctor or nurse. Later, try taking them before bedtime. If they still bother you, a children's chewable vitamin may be an option to discuss with your doctor.
Toothpaste	Brush your teeth after breakfast, brush with water or try a children's fruit-flavored toothpaste.

Contact your doctor, clinic nurse or nurse practitioner if:

- **Nausea/vomiting does not improve or becomes worse**
- **You are losing weight**
- **You are unable to eat anything**

You may gradually be able to resume a more normal diet or you may still require small, frequent meals. Your dietitian/diet technician can help you with this.

For follow-up or if you have further questions, please make an appointment to see a registered dietitian by calling 312-926-WELL (9355).

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

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