

*North Carolina Women's Hospital*  
**Nausea and vomiting of early pregnancy**  
"Morning Sickness"

**What is "morning sickness"?**

"Morning sickness" is the nausea (upset stomach) and vomiting (throwing up) that happens during early pregnancy. Because the nausea or vomiting of pregnancy often occurs in the morning it is called "morning sickness" but it can happen anytime during the day or night. Nausea and vomiting are most common during the first 3 months of pregnancy and often disappear after that. Although the nausea and vomiting are unpleasant, they are harmless unless severe vomiting develops.

**Are nausea and vomiting common during early pregnancy?**

Most women have at least mild nausea during the early months of pregnancy. Many women also have vomiting.

**What are the causes of nausea and vomiting in early pregnancy?**

It is not known exactly why pregnant women have nausea and vomiting. However, pregnancy changes in hormone and blood sugar levels may cause these problems. Some women are more sensitive to these changes than others. For some women, stress may make the nausea and vomiting worse.

**Are there things I can do to make myself feel better?**

There are many comfort measures to help pregnant women who suffer from nausea and vomiting during early pregnancy. The ideas listed below are likely to help you but it may take a while to find the ones that give you the most relief. To help you decide what works best, keep a diary of when you have nausea or vomiting, the comfort measures you try and whether they help.

- Eat bland foods that are high in carbohydrates and low in fat such as breads, rice, pasta, cereal, crackers and potatoes.
- Eat foods that are high in protein such as lean meats, eggs, and dishes made with dried beans.
- Avoid greasy, fatty, fried and spicy foods.
- Drink 8-10 glasses of liquids such as water, clear sodas (like seltzer water, ginger ale or 7-Up) and diluted fruit juice. Drink small amounts at a time which means you should sip all day long! Another way to help your body get enough liquids is to eat Popsicles.
- Drink liquids between meals rather than with meals.
- Try to eat every 2 to 3 hours, even if you are not hungry. Small frequent meals are more useful than large meals.

- Have a snack such as yogurt, milk, crackers with cheese or peanut butter or a small sandwich before going to bed. You may need to have a small snack in the middle of the night, too.
- Keep soda crackers by your bed. Eat a few of them or a slice of bread before getting out of bed and then wait a few minutes before getting up.
- Wait about an hour after eating to brush your teeth.
- Change your position slowly, especially when you rise to a standing position.
- Keep your head higher than your feet when lying down.
- Go outside for fresh air as much as possible.
- Do not smoke cigarettes. Ask other people not to smoke around you.
- Sea Bands on both wrists may decrease nausea. These can be purchased at the drug store without a prescription. You can ask the druggist how to use them correctly.
- Sucking on hard candy such as peppermints and sour balls can help decrease nausea.
- If you are taking any iron pills, ask your health care provider if you can stop for a short time to see if this change reduces your nausea or vomiting.
- Try taking your prenatal vitamin at bedtime or every other night until your nausea has ended. If this is not helpful, ask your health care provider if you can stop this vitamin pill for a short time.
- Take 25 mg of Vitamin B<sub>6</sub> pills two or three times a day. Do NOT take more than this amount. You can purchase Vitamin B<sub>6</sub> without a prescription but ask the druggist to be sure you have chosen the right vitamin. Do NOT take extra prenatal vitamins to get the extra Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>.

### **When should I call my health care provider?**

Vomiting all day without keeping any fluids in your stomach is serious because it can cause you to become dehydrated. Dehydration could be bad for you and your unborn baby. You should contact your health care provider if you are vomiting more than 3 or 4 times a day AND:

- Not keeping any fluids in your stomach
- Losing weight
- Urinating less than usual
- Feeling very thirsty
- Feeling dizzy or confused

*Approved by NC Women's Hospital Patient Education Committee, May 20, 2002; reviewed and approved June 19, 2007.*