

Morning Sickness During Pregnancy

Many women figure out they are pregnant when they begin to feel queasy and nauseous. It may seem like an unfair part of the deal to become pregnant and have any feelings of happiness undermined by the awful feelings of nausea. Many women expect to eat healthy when they become pregnant. They envision themselves consuming tons of water, eating fresh fruits and vegetables, taking a daily prenatal vitamin, and enjoying a glowing complexion. The harsh reality is that often pregnancy makes a woman feel so lousy that she is sleeping in the cracker crumbs that everyone says to have next to the bed, getting queasy just thinking of fresh vegetables, and turning more green than glowing on a daily basis. This can lead to fears that the growing baby may not get all the nutrients needed to grow and develop healthfully.

Morning sickness is caused by the increase in the hormone progesterone, which slows down digestion. While it tends to be worse in the morning, some pregnant women feel sick all day. It is estimated that two thirds of all pregnant women feel morning sickness, usually beginning around 8 weeks of gestation and ending by 14-16 weeks of gestation. It is reported that morning sickness is a sign of a strong pregnancy and often is felt more strongly in women carrying multiple babies.

It is unusual that morning sickness leads to significant weight loss or dehydration. Little nutrition is required because the baby is so small. Resourceful, even before birth, babies in utero preferentially acquire all of the nutrients they need from the mother's blood. A day or two of missed prenatal vitamins or poor nutrition will not adversely affect the developing baby.

Try these tips to manage morning sickness:

- Get lots of sleep
- Allow plenty of time to get ready and take care of yourself before heading out of the house in the morning
- Try to keep a little food in your stomach at all times by eating:
 - Every 2 hours
 - A little something before getting out of bed in the morning and before falling asleep at night
 - Foods that are not fatty and easiest on the stomach, such as crackers, dry toast, and bland foods
- Eat small meals and drink water between meals, rather than with meals
- Try to avoid an empty stomach or a full stomach
- Avoid strong odors by keeping the windows open, using a fan, and staying away from kitchens, bathrooms, and places that tend to have strong smells
- Try to keep your life as emotionally, mentally, and physically stress free as possible

Prenatal vitamins

Take your prenatal vitamin at a time when you are not feeling sick, and drink a good amount of fluid to get it down and keep it down. Taking your vitamin without enough fluid may slow its digestion and breakdown, and many women report tasting it hours later.

Hyperemesis gravidarum

In rare instances, some women experience hyperemesis gravidarum (excessive vomiting while pregnant). This occurs in approximately 1 in 300 pregnancies. Characterized by frequent, persistent, and severe vomiting, this condition may cause dehydration in the mother and may harm the fetus if left unmanaged. Hyperemesis gravidarum is most common in women carrying multiple babies and first pregnancies, occurring because of the higher levels of estrogen and hCG in the blood. Mild cases are treated through individualized dietary restrictions, while more severe cases may require hospitalization for IV fluid replacement.

Reference

Johnson RV. *Mayo Clinic Complete Book of Pregnancy & Baby's First Year*. New York, NY: William Morrow and Co; 1994.

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