

## Morning Sickness

"Morning sickness" is a general term that refers to nausea and vomiting some women experience during pregnancy. While many women have these symptoms in the morning, the feelings can occur at any time during the day.

Morning sickness usually occurs during the first trimester (or the first three months) of a pregnancy. It is estimated that between 70 and 80 percent of all pregnant women experience some level of nausea, but some actions can be taken to reduce the frequency and provide relief from this queasiness.

Pregnant women who are not able to keep any food or liquids down for 24 hours should call their doctor, medical care provider or go to the emergency room. Excessive vomiting causes the body to become dehydrated, which can be harmful to a developing fetus.

### Cause

Doctors are not sure what causes nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, but there are several possible explanations:

- Pregnancy causes a woman's body to undergo many physical and chemical changes. Nausea may be a reaction to these changes.
- Pregnant women often report being more sensitive to odors and aromas which could lead to feeling nauseous and having an upset stomach.
- Levels of the hormones estrogen, progesterone and human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) increase in women early in pregnancies, around the time many women report feeling nauseous. These hormones could cause women to feel unusual or sick.

Also, women who fall into the following categories tend to be predisposed to feeling nauseous during their pregnancies:

- Women having twins or multiple babies
- Women who experienced nausea and vomiting during previous pregnancies
- Women with a history of migraine headaches or motion sickness
- Women whose mothers or sisters experienced morning sickness

Some studies have also shown that women who experienced severe morning sickness were almost 50 percent more likely to be carrying female babies.

### Relief

There is no cure for morning sickness, but there are things pregnant women can do to lessen its effects:

- Avoid being around foods and substances that have strong aromas
- Avoid cooking and eating foods that are overly spicy, rich, hot or extreme in flavor
- Avoid eating fried and fatty foods
- Have simple foods like crackers, pretzels and toast for a snack
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day rather than the standard three meals a day
- Drink plenty of water and other fluids throughout the day
- Do not rush out of bed in the morning
- Keep some crackers near the bed to eat first thing in the morning before getting up
- Take a nutritional supplement that contains vitamin B6 (studies have shown multivitamins containing vitamin B6 reduce nauseous feelings in some pregnant women)
- Get enough sleep at night, and try taking naps during the day, as tiredness seems to play a role in morning sickness
- Consult a doctor about taking an anti-nausea medication

## Resources

Some information on this page was gathered from documents found on the [www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) website. The site is maintained by the National Women's Health Information Center. The center is run by the Office of Women's Health which is part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

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