# Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy

This fact sheet is for people who have presented to the emergency department with this condition.

This fact sheet provides general information. If you have specific concerns, speak to your healthcare professional for further information and advice.

## What is nausea and vomiting in pregnancy?

Many pregnant women feel nauseous or actively vomit during early pregnancy. It is also called morning sickness and in most cases, it is mild and does not need specific treatment.

In more severe cases, an anti-sickness medicine is sometimes used.

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy can be difficult to cope with. It can affect your quality of life. If you feel this is happening to you, support from your family and friends can help.

## Causes

It is not known why the symptoms of nausea and vomiting occur during pregnancy. There are situations where you are more likely to experience nausea and vomiting. These include:

- if you are having twins
- if you have a family history of nausea and vomiting in pregnancy
- if you are experiencing emotional stress
- if you have a history of migraines and or motion sickness.

Nausea and vomiting usually start within the first nine weeks and are gone by week 16 of pregnancy. But some pregnant women have some nausea throughout their pregnancy.

### Other causes of vomiting

Remember, not all vomiting may be due to the pregnancy. You can still get other illnesses such as a urinary tract infection. You should see a doctor urgently if you develop any symptoms that you are worried about, particularly any of the following symptoms:

- Very dark urine or not passing any urine for more than eight hours
- Stomach pains
- High temperature (fever)
- Pain on passing urine
- Headache
- Runny stools (diarrhoea)
- Yellow skin (jaundice)
- Severe weakness or feeling faint
- Blood in your vomit
- Repeated, unstoppable vomiting

## Will nausea and vomiting affect my baby?

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy does not usually affect your baby. Dehydration is the main concern with severe nausea and vomiting.

Symptoms of dehydration include:

- feeling thirsty
- dark yellow and strong-smelling wee (urine)
- feeling dizzy or light-headed
- feeling very tired
- dry mouth, lips and eyes
- passing less urine and less often.

## Home care

Try these tips:

- Eat small but frequent meals or snacks high in carbohydrate.
- Eating ginger tea or biscuits may help.
- Avoid triggers, such as certain smells or emotional stress.
- Sip drinks to avoid lack of fluid in the body (dehydration).
- Rest if you can, because being tired is thought to make nausea and vomiting during pregnancy worse.
- Treat reflux because severe belching or heartburn with nausea and vomiting are symptoms that exist with reflux. Chewing gum after meals can help saliva production which can ease symptoms of reflux.

## What to expect

Most cases of nausea and vomiting resolve within the second trimester.

Please return to your doctor if you:

- develop any of the symptoms described in the ‘Other causes of vomiting’ section
- notice your symptoms becoming more severe or if they started after the first trimester
- are not able to keep any food or fluids down or are concerned you are becoming dehydrated
- start losing weight.

You may need to be admitted to hospital for fluids, vitamins and anti-nausea medications if you become severely dehydrated or lose weight.