



☉ What is morning sickness?

Morning sickness, also known as nausea or vomiting in pregnancy, is a term given to the symptom of pregnancy which involves nausea and vomiting that many women experience during first trimester. Most women have nausea early in the morning but it generally subsides as the day progresses, hence the term; however, some women experience it throughout the day in varying intensities.



☉ When does it occur?

It usually starts in 6th week of pregnancy and gradually subsides by the end of 12th week. There could be some women who experience it throughout the pregnancy.

You are not alone. According to the statistics, around 80%⁽¹⁾ pregnant women face this issue and research says that it doesn't affect the foetus unless the vomits are frequent, leading to weight loss and dehydration.

☉ Why does it happen?

The actual reason for morning sickness is unknown but there are various factors that contribute to it.

They include:

- Increased hormones - oestrogen and progesterone levels in your body,
- Low blood sugar
- Increased sense of smell,
- Production of human chorionic gonadotrophin hormone and
- Suppressed immunity.

The intensity of morning sickness increases in certain conditions.

They include:

- If it's genetic and runs in the family⁽²⁾,
- If you are expecting twins or more babies or
- If you are suffering from deranged thyroid levels.

☉ What if there is excessive vomiting?

If it increases to a state where it becomes uncontrollable and you are not able to keep any food down, it results in hyperemesis gravidarum. Hyperemesis gravidarum is extreme, persistent nausea and vomiting during pregnancy. It can lead to dehydration, weight loss, and electrolyte imbalances. Hyperemesis needs to be treated since it can have adverse outcomes on the foetus⁽³⁾. The most common practice is



getting the woman admitted for a day or two and supplying antacids and other medications through intravenous mode to control it.

Managing morning sickness:

- Identify the triggers and avoid foods/smells that probe nausea or increase its intensity.
- Start your day with dry foods that can keep morning sickness down like rusks, biscuits, toasts, crackers etc.
- Try to keep something to eat at your bed-side table and have it before you get off the bed. Since the blood sugars are low in the morning, the intensity can be greater. Consuming something as soon as you wake up helps in reducing the occurrence and intensity both.
- Certain foods like bananas, salted nuts are known to curb nausea. Consider consuming them within an hour of breakfast to avoid possible relapse.
- Ginger, lemonade and watermelons relieve nausea and can be consumed when facing an episode of morning sickness.
- Keep sipping water throughout the day to prevent dehydration. Don't gulp in large amounts of water all at once.
- Avoid spicy food and don't lie down after meals since that slows down digestion.
- Avoid staying empty stomach for too long.
- Choose foods that you are craving, it is okay if it's not so healthy for now. Eating is more important than eating right when morning sickness strikes.
- Avoid fatty foods since they take longer to digest. Also avoid skipping meals as it causes acidity and makes nausea worse.
- Check for non-food triggers like stuffy room, strong odour, flickering lights, travelling in a closed car etc. Going for a walk when feeling stuffy at home is a good idea.
- Avoid using mobile phones, tablets, laptops and watching television much. Many women find the light emitted by these gadgets as a trigger to nausea.
- Avoid stress and relax when tired. The intensity of nausea increases when stressed or tired. Take naps and sleep more.



- Waking up slowly and sitting on the bed for a few minutes before starting your day helps.
- Many women also find alternate methods like acupuncture helpful. You can try massages and acupuncture from experts after talking to your gynaecologist about it.
- Rinsing mouth with a mouthwash or using a brush after each episode of nausea and also after meals helps in a great way to prevent its relapse.
- Avoid using automatic or mechanical brushes as they tend to trigger nausea.
- Going for a walk, breathing fresh air and exposing yourself to the sun helps a lot in controlling nausea. Understand when generally during the day the feeling is heightened and schedule your walk accordingly.
- Eating just before sleeping at night also helps in maintaining stable blood sugar levels throughout, thus reducing the chances of occurrence.
- Lack of enough nutrients can also trigger nausea. Don't skip the supplements your doctor has suggested, regardless of how nauseous you are feeling.



All these strategies will definitely help to some extent in managing your condition. Also, nausea generally subsides after the end of first trimester, so it's temporary. Try to feed yourself correctly in this phase since the growing foetus depends completely on the nutrients derived from your diet.

References:

1. http://www.colorado.edu/eeb/facultysites/flaxman/Publication_List_files/FlaxmanSherman00.pdf
2. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26801654>
3. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3676933/>
4. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10858967>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Breast milk is the best food for babies as it is the sole source of nutrition for the first 6 months of life and is recommended to be continued until 2 years, with introduction to appropriate complementary foods after 6 months of age.

1. The World Health Organization (WHO)* has recommended that pregnant women and new mothers be informed of the benefits and superiority of breast-feeding, in particular, the fact that it provides the best nutrition and protection from illness for babies.

Mothers should be given guidance on the preparation for and maintenance of lactation, with special emphasis on the importance of the well-balanced diet both during pregnancy and after delivery. Unnecessary introduction of partial bottle feeding or other foods and drinks should be discouraged since it will have a negative effect on breast-feeding. Similarly mothers should be warned of the difficulty of reversing a decision not to breastfeed.

Before advising a mother to use an infant formula, she should be advised of the social and financial implications of her decision. For example, if a baby is exclusively bottle-fed, more than one can (500g) per week will be needed, so the family circumstances and cost should be kept in mind. Mother should be reminded that breast milk is not only the best but also the most economical food for babies.

If a decision to use infant formula is taken, it is important to give instruction on correct preparation methods, emphasizing that unboiled water, unsterilized bottles or incorrect dilution can lead to illness.

*See: International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, adopted by the World Health Assembly in Resolution WHA 34.22, May 1981.

- 2) Below the WHO paragraph, you would also need to mention the IMS Act mandatory paragraph, mentioning the text below for your ready reference;

Immediately after delivery, breast milk is yellowish and sticky. This milk is called colostrum, which is secreted during the first week of delivery. Colostrum is more nutritious than mature milk because it contains more protein, more anti-infective properties which are of great importance for the infant's defense against dangerous neo-natal infections. It also contains higher level of Vitamin "A".

Breast milk

- Is a complete and balanced food and provides all the nutrients needed by the infant (for the first six months of life)
- Has anti-infective properties that protect the infants from infection in the early months
- Is always available
- Needs no utensils or water (which might carry germs) or fuel for its preparation
- Breast-feeding is much cheaper than feeding infant milk substitutes as the cost of extra food needed by the mother is negligible compared to the cost of feeding infant milk substitutes
- Mothers who breast-feed usually have longer periods of infertility after child birth than non-lactators

Breast-feeding

- Immediately after delivery enables the contraction of the womb and helps the mother to regain her figure quickly
- Is successful when the infant suckles frequently and the mother wanting to breast-feed is confident in her ability to do so
- In order to promote and support breast-feeding the mother's natural desire to breast-feed should always be encouraged by giving, where needed, practical advice and making sure that she has the support of her relatives
- Adequate care for the breast and nipples should be taken during pregnancy
- It is also very necessary to put the infant to the breast as soon as possible after delivery
- Let the infant and the mother stay together after the delivery, the mother and her infant should be allowed to stay together (in hospital, this is called "rooming-in")
- Give the infant colostrum as it is rich in many nutrients and anti-infective factors protect the infants from infections during the few days of its birth
- The practice of discarding colostrum and giving sugar water. Honey water, butter or other concoctions instead of colostrum should be very strongly discouraged
- Let the infants suckle on demand
- Every effort should be made to breast-feed the infants whenever they cry
- Mother should keep her body and clothes and that of the infant always neat and clean