

What You Should Know About Morning Sickness

Morning sickness is common during early stages of pregnancy. Women who have morning sickness may vomit, feel nauseous, or become sensitive to certain odors. Morning sickness is not usually harmful to mothers or their babies. However, when nausea and vomiting are severe and persistent, it could be a sign of something serious.

What causes morning sickness?

Morning sickness is a reaction to the changes your body is going through when you become pregnant. Having morning sickness does not mean your baby is sick. Experts aren't sure what causes morning sickness, but it may be because hormone levels increase in the body during pregnancy.

Most women have morning sickness during pregnancy, especially during the first 3 months. It can actually occur at any time of day, not just in the morning. The symptoms are usually mild and go away after the first few months of pregnancy.

What can I do about it?

Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do to prevent or treat morning sickness. Here are some tips that may ease your discomfort:

- Get enough rest
- Stay away from odors that bother you
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals (5 or 6) instead of 3 large meals per day
- Drink plenty of fluids, like water or seltzer
- Don't eat spicy or fatty foods
- Eat crackers before getting out of bed in the morning.

Morning sickness usually goes away on its own by the middle stages of pregnancy. It doesn't present complications for mother or baby. However, if nausea or vomiting persists for longer than 3 months or if you begin to lose weight, it may be a sign of hyperemesis gravidarum (HEG).

What is HEG?

Hyperemesis gravidarum is extreme, ongoing nausea and vomiting during pregnancy that can lead to weight loss or dehydration. Symptoms of HEG include:

- persistent, severe nausea lasting beyond the first few months of pregnancy
- inability to keep down any liquids
- lightheadedness or fainting spells.

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. Also talk to your doctor if you see blood in your vomit, have small amounts of dark-colored urine, or feel like your heart is racing or pounding.

Why is HEG so serious?

This condition can be dangerous because it may cause you to lose weight. Constant vomiting can also cause you to become dehydrated, meaning your body does not have enough water. Both of these problems may cause harm to your baby. If you become dehydrated, you will have to go to a hospital, where fluids will be given to you through an IV. Your doctor may also prescribe other medical treatments, including vitamin B₆ or anti-nausea medications. These treatments have been shown to help in very severe cases of HEG.

What can I do about HEG?

Be sure to pay attention to the length and severity of your morning sickness. If you feel you may have HEG, tell your doctor about it right away. You can work together to prevent harming yourself or your baby.

Remember...

Your body goes through many changes when you become pregnant, and morning sickness may be a result of these changes. Most pregnant women get morning sickness, but it only lasts for the first few months and isn't harmful to your baby. The tips in this handout may help you feel better while your body is adjusting to the pregnancy.

If your morning sickness lasts for much longer than 3 months and your symptoms sound more like HEG, call your doctor immediately. You can prevent any harm from happening to you or your baby by treating the condition early.

