



Morning Sickness: Nausea & Vomiting in Pregnancy

Morning sickness is probably one of the most common signs of pregnancy. In fact, a majority of women will experience some sort of stomach sickness in one way or another. The term "morning sickness" derives from the sick feeling once one arises out of bed in the morning; but as many women can testify, this affliction can be an all-day-and-night sickness, and not just a morning sickness.

When Does Morning Sickness End? Usually morning sickness is considered a first trimester problem, but studies have shown that most cases end by the 17th week. There is still another 15% of women who have the problem throughout pregnancy and only improve once they deliver.

About 1% of women with morning sickness have such severe nausea and vomiting that intravenous hydration is required once or several times. And then, on a rare occasion, a woman's morning sickness may be so severe that she requires intravenous fluids and nutrition throughout the whole pregnancy.

What Causes Morning Sickness? No one really knows what causes such a sick feeling once pregnant. Some believe it is related to vitamin deficiencies, estrogen levels, pregnancy hormone levels, etc. During morning sickness, the appetite and sense of smell is greatly altered, causing a wide range of changes of likes and dislikes. For many women, taking iron supplements and/or prenatal vitamins will frequently worsen the symptoms. (Do not take them if you cannot stomach them. Just wait until the morning sickness goes away.)

Remedies Treating morning sickness is a hit and miss process. Some remedies work well for one woman and not at all for others. Here are some suggestions:

Keep something on the stomach at all times.

This means munching, nibbling, and snacking on anything that sounds, smells, or tastes good. For example, during one of her pregnancies, my wife could eat nothing but oranges. It was the only thing that settled her stomach. For you it may be pickles, or berries, or something else. Just keeping something in the stomach may ease the sick feeling.

Take a vitamin B6 or B complex.

Taking a 25-50 mg tablet two to three times a day seems to help some women. Those who cannot stomach these vitamins because of vomiting can try the shots. (Usually 100mg once to twice a week seems to be quite helpful). Randomized double-blind placebo-controlled trials have shown significant reduction in nausea and vomiting in women using B6 vs. placebo.

Use ginger products.

Try products that contain ginger, like ginger-ale, pickled ginger, or ginger preserves. One study showed a significant reduction in nausea and vomiting when taking 250 mg of ginger capsules four times a day.

Try seabands or acupressure.

These are wristbands used to fight motion sickness, but some studies have shown some success in treating morning sickness as well. Some studies show a 50-75% improvement. This idea is based on acupuncture at the P6 or NeiGuan pressure point. This point is located 3 finger-breadths from the wrist crease and between the two central flexor tendons on the wrist. If you make a fist and then flex your hand slightly, you should be able to feel two strong tendons. The point is between these two. You can make your own by band using a round button in a Velcro strap, or you can purchase them at medical supply stores.

Prepare homemade Bendectin.

This compound was shown to be very effective for morning sickness but taken off the market around 1980 because the company feared lawsuits related to birth defects. However, the results of many studies have failed to implicate Bendectin as a cause of any birth defects. The homemade remedy is taking ½ Unisom (an over the counter sleep aid/antihistamine) plus 50 mg of Vitamin B6 at bedtime. It can also be used during the day every eight hours if desired (ask your doctor for details).

Take Emetrol.

Some women report that this over-the-counter nausea drink is effective.

Try herbal therapy.

Try a tea such as raspberry, peppermint, spearmint, fennel, anise, and, of course, ginger.

Ask about prescription medication.

When all else fails, there are some fairly effective anti-nausea medications that can help, namely Phenergan (in suppository or oral form), Tigan, Reglan, and Zofran. Many women have used these prescription medications during pregnancy and have had no known related birth defects in offspring. Though, like most medication, no complete study has been done. For those who are really sick, Zofran seems to be the most effective.

Hopefully one of these options will be effective for you or someone you know who suffers from morning sickness in pregnancy. Remember that the key is to:

- eat what sounds, smells, and tastes good, no matter what it is (within reason of course);
- keep yourself hydrated; and
- get adequate nutrition.

If nothing works, then intravenous fluids, and possibly intravenous nutrition, are necessary.

For those suffering from morning sickness, remember that "this too will pass." For those support persons, remember that your sympathy, care, and help can go a long way in relieving the strain and stress that comes with morning sickness.