

Nausea (sickness) or Vomiting in Pregnancy: Patient Information

What is nausea or vomiting in pregnancy?

- Nausea or vomiting in pregnancy, sometimes called morning sickness, is common in early pregnancy. It can happen at any time of the day and it usually settles by about 16 weeks of pregnancy. However, some women have nausea or vomiting all the way through their pregnancy.
- It is not known what causes nausea or vomiting in pregnancy, although it could be caused by hormonal changes.
- Nausea or vomiting in pregnancy can make everyday life difficult. If you are having difficulties with work or home life or if you are finding it hard to eat and drink, seek help from your GP, Midwife or Obstetrician.

Will nausea or vomiting harm my baby?

- Nausea and the effort of retching or vomiting in pregnancy does not usually harm your baby.
- Severe nausea or vomiting in pregnancy (*hyperemesis gravidarum*) can occur for some women. This is when it is hard to eat or drink anything and it may lead to dehydration (when your body does not have enough water), weight loss and vitamin deficiency.
 - If you have these symptoms please seek treatment with your GP, Obstetrician or local Emergency Department. If you have been very ill with severe nausea or vomiting, dehydration or lost weight, your baby may be born with a low birth weight.

Do I need special tests?

- Special tests are not needed if you have mild nausea or vomiting in pregnancy.
- If your symptoms become more severe, you are unable to keep food or drink down or you are losing weight, your GP, Midwife or Obstetrician may suggest you have blood and urine tests.

Suggestions for what you can do

- When you can, eat small amounts of foods frequently that are safe in pregnancy.
- Drink small amounts of hydrating fluids throughout the day, aiming for one to two litres every day.
- Ginger tablets may help you to feel less nauseous. Before taking Ginger tablets, you should discuss this with your GP, Midwife, Obstetrician or Pharmacist as the quality of Ginger tablets can vary.
- Rest and sleep when you can, as being tired is thought to make nausea or vomiting in pregnancy worse.

Do I need medication?

If the suggestions above are not working or if your symptoms become more severe you may need medication. Medications that are considered safe in pregnancy for nausea or vomiting include pyridoxine (Vitamin B6), doxylamine, promethazine, cyclizine and prochlorperazine. There is no evidence that these medications will harm a developing baby. Your GP or Obstetrician can prescribe these medications for you.

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If the above medications do not work, your GP or Obstetrician can prescribe other medications such as, metoclopramide, ondansetron, ranitidine or rarely prednisolone.

Always discuss taking any medication when you are pregnant with your GP, Midwife, Obstetrician or Pharmacist and take medications only as instructed. For some women this may be several weeks or months. Occasionally fluid by an intravenous drip (IV) may need to be given at your local hospital. Some women need to be admitted to hospital if they are too dehydrated or lose too much weight, however this is rare.

Things to do

- Follow up with your GP who will monitor your symptoms and discuss medications.
- Book in to your local birthing hospital.
- Use the Motherisk PUQE-24 scoring system below to help you work out if you need to seek help. Add up your score in brackets from each of the three questions.

Motherisk PUQE-24 scoring system:				
1. In the last 24 hours, for how long have you felt nauseated or sick to your stomach?				
Not at all (1)	1 hour or less (2)	2 to 3 hours (3)	4 to 6 hours (4)	More than 6 hours (5)
2. In the last 24 hours, have you vomited or thrown up?				
I did not throw up (1)	1 to 2 times (2)	3 to 4 times (3)	5 to 6 times (4)	7 or more times (5)
3. In the last 24 hours, how many times have you had retching or dry heaves without throwing up?				
None (1)	1 to 2 times (2)	3 to 4 times (3)	5 to 6 times (4)	7 or more times (5)
Total score: Add up your score in brackets from each of the three questions.				

Total Score	Severity	Actions
3 to 6	Mild	Continue to use the suggestions above that work for you.
7 to 12	Moderate	Speak to your GP, Midwife or Obstetrician
13 to 15	Severe	Seek medical assistance as soon as possible

Your local contact numbers:

Antenatal Clinic: _____ Pharmacy: _____
GP: _____ Obstetrician: _____

Adapted from the SOMANZ Guideline for the management of Nausea and Vomiting in pregnancy and Hyperemesis Gravidarum, 2019.
<https://www.somanz.org/content/uploads/2020/07/NVP-GUIDELINE-1.2.20-1.pdf>

My Pregnancy Plan For Nausea or Vomiting

The following plan will be developed with you and your doctor.

Patient Name: _____

My medications for nausea, vomiting or acid reflux.

These are the medications you can take and how often you can take them each day.

Symptom	Name of Medication and Dose	Morning (✓ or ✗)	Midday (✓ or ✗)	Evening (✓ or ✗)	Bedtime (✓ or ✗)
For nausea, vomiting or retching					
For acid reflux					
For constipation					
Other					

If you feel worse: _____

If you feel better: _____

My Pregnancy Plan For Nausea or Vomiting

Before your next appointment, please record how you are going with the following:
Bring this record with you, as it can help us all work together.

Eating and Drinking: _____

Work or Study: _____

Family: _____

Mood: _____

Did you have a drip (IV) this week? Yes / No Date: _____
Did it help? _____

You can keep a record of your PUQE score by using the Motherisk PUQE-24 scoring system tool on page 2. Add your three scores in brackets from the three questions together, and write your total score here for each day.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
PUQE-24 score							

You can find more information here*:

*We cannot recommend individual sites as they do not contain supervised content

- Hyperemesis Australia <https://www.hyperemesisaustralia.org.au/>
 - Mothersafe <https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women/services-clinics/directory/mothersafe>
- (02) 9382 6539 Monday to Friday 9:00am-5:00pm, excluding public holidays

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