

Causes and symptoms

Morning sickness

- Causes and symptoms
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Nausea and vomiting can be common during pregnancy. Most people call it 'morning sickness'. But feeling sick or vomiting can happen at any time of the day or night. Some people find it lasts all day.

Nausea and vomiting happens because of hormonal changes in your body. It can be very common during the first 3 months.

It can be unpleasant and exhausting. But it doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with your pregnancy. It usually clears up by 16 to 20 weeks.

There are things you can do to help with the symptoms of morning sickness.

If your morning sickness causes you problems, talk to your GP, midwife or obstetrician. They may recommend some safe medicine to ease the symptoms. You may have to go to hospital if your sickness is severe.

Severe morning sickness

Severe morning sickness is also known as [hyperemesis gravidarum](#).

About 2 out of every 100 women get severe morning sickness. 98 out of 100 women do not.

You're more likely to have severe morning sickness if you:

- have a family history of bad morning sickness
- had severe morning sickness during a previous pregnancy
- are expecting twins, triplets or more
- suffer from migraines
- get bad motion sickness
- used to get sick if you took contraception containing oestrogen
- are having a [molar pregnancy](#) - this is when some of the cells that form the placenta or afterbirth grow abnormally (this is rare)

Symptoms of morning sickness

Symptoms of morning sickness include:

- nausea - the feeling that you need to be sick
- being sick (vomiting)
- losing weight
- dehydration - if your sickness is severe

Dehydration

If you are losing fluids through vomiting you may become dehydrated. This can happen with morning sickness and severe morning sickness.

Signs of dehydration include:

- having dark pee or peeing less often than normal
- dry mouth and lips
- feeling faint, dizzy or unwell
- your heart beating faster than usual

Staying hydrated

It's important to stay hydrated when you are feeling unwell.

Aim to drink one glass (200ml) of fluid every hour for 10 hours. Take small sips continuously rather than drinking it all at once. Drinking large amounts in one go can make you feel sick.

Your taste may change when you are pregnant. Try drinks you may not normally have.

If you find it hard to drink liquids, try:

- drinking through a straw
- adding ice cubes to drinks
- sucking ice cubes or ice lollies
- flavoured drinks like watered-down fruit juice, fizzy drinks (or flat fizzy drinks), milk, flavoured milk, sports drinks or fruit cordials
- eating foods with a high water content such as fruit, yogurt, jelly, soup, custard and ice-lollies

Talk to your GP, obstetrician or midwife immediately if:

- you have lost weight or have any symptoms of dehydration

If you cannot hold down fluids at any stage, go to the emergency department (ED) in your maternity hospital.

How to cope with morning sickness

The following things can help reduce symptoms of morning sickness.

Rest

- Get plenty of rest - being tired can make you feel worse.
- If you have children at home, try to go to bed when they do.
- Give yourself time to get out of bed - moving very quickly can make you feel sick and dizzy.

Loud noises and bright lights can trigger sickness in some women.

Eat little and often

It can be hard to eat a healthy diet when you are not feeling well.

Do not worry if your diet is not the healthiest when you are sick.

Aim to eat little and often throughout the day. Eat enough to keep your energy levels up and prevent weight loss.

Things you can do:

- Nibble your favourite foods every 2 hours - long gaps without food will make nausea worse.
- Dry and plain foods are easiest to tolerate, such as dry toast, biscuits, crackers, pasta, rice, dry cereal and cereal bars.
- Bring some dry crackers to bed with you to eat when you wake. Wait about 15 to 20 minutes before slowly getting up after eating the crackers.
- Keep your meals simple.
- Have easy-to-prepare foods in the house, such as beans or ready-made meals.
- Eat foods that have lots of energy in a small amount, such as nuts, cheese, hummus, full-fat yogurt and avocado.
- Eat more when you are hungry – do not wait for mealtimes.

Avoid food smells

Some cooking smells may make you feel sick. Having ready-made or easily prepared foods in the house is useful so that you can avoid cooking.

When food is being cooked you could go out for a short walk, or sit in a different room with a window open.

To block out smells, try putting a scented handkerchief to your nose. Use a scent that you find

soothing, like essential oil or freshly cut lemons.

Try ginger

Eating foods or sipping drinks that contain ginger may help to reduce mild nausea and vomiting. Check with your pharmacist before taking a ginger supplement to make sure it's safe for your pregnancy.

Take folic acid

Take your [folic acid](#) at the time of the day you are feeling best.

Some women choose to take a multivitamin throughout their pregnancy. This can be difficult to take for some women while they are not feeling well.

Some brands have a liquid form of antenatal multivitamins. Sometimes this can be easier to take.

Rinse your teeth after being sick

If you vomit, rinse your mouth out with water. Your teeth will be softened by your stomach acid, so do not brush straight away. Wait about an hour to brush your teeth.

Oral hygiene can be difficult when you have severe morning sickness. But it's important to look after your teeth and gums.

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