

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy

You do not have to put up with this. If it is affecting your life, tell us — there is a lot we can do, and treating it early works better than waiting.

What's normal, and what isn't

Around 7 or 8 in every 10 pregnant women feel nauseated or vomit in early pregnancy. It usually starts before 9 weeks, is often worst around 9 weeks, and settles for most women by 16 to 20 weeks. "**Morning sickness**" is a poor name — it can happen at any hour.

A small number of women get a much more severe form called **hyperemesis gravidarum**, where you cannot keep food or fluids down, lose weight, and cannot carry on with normal life. That is a medical condition, not bad luck or weakness, and it needs treatment.

THIS IS NOT YOUR FAULT

Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy is not caused by stress, by anxiety, or by anything you have or haven't done. It is not a sign that you are not coping.

You will probably be told to "just eat crackers" by well-meaning people. If simple measures aren't working, that is not a failure on your part — it means you need actual treatment.

Things that genuinely help

Eat little and often. An empty stomach makes nausea worse

Eat what you can keep down, not what you think you should be eating. A few weeks of an imperfect diet will not harm your baby

Drink between meals rather than with them, in small sips

Cold food often beats hot — less smell

Avoid your triggers, whatever they are. Get someone else to cook if cooking smells set you off

Ginger and **vitamin B6** both have real evidence behind them — ask us about doses

Rest. Tiredness makes it worse

Acupressure wristbands help some women and are harmless to try

Your iron tablet may be making it worse. We may pause it for a while — but keep taking folic acid

Medicines

There are several medicines that are **safe in pregnancy** and that work. They are often used in combination, because two medicines that act in different ways usually work better than a bigger dose of one. If the first thing we try doesn't help enough, tell us rather than giving up on it — we will change the plan.

We may also add a medicine that reduces stomach acid. **Reflux** and **heartburn** make nausea considerably worse and are very easy to miss.

If you are vomiting a lot, we may suggest **vitamin B1 (thiamine)**. This is important — prolonged vomiting can deplete it, and that can cause serious problems that are easy to prevent.

Contact us the same day if

DON'T WAIT TO SEE WHETHER IT SETTLES

You cannot keep any fluids down for more than about **8 hours**

You feel **dizzy or faint** when you stand up

You cannot keep down your **usual medications** — this matters a great deal if you have diabetes or epilepsy

You have **abdominal pain** or a **fever**

You are passing **very little urine**, or it is very dark

You are **losing weight**

You are vomiting **blood**

Your nausea or vomiting **starts after 20 weeks** — that needs checking for a different reason

If you need fluids

Sometimes the answer is a drip to rehydrate you and stronger anti-sickness medicine given straight into a vein. This is common, and it works.

It usually doesn't mean staying in hospital overnight — many women are treated in a day-stay unit and go home the same day.

Will it harm my baby?

In most cases, no. Mild to moderate nausea and vomiting does not harm your baby. Even in severe cases, with treatment, the outlook is good. What matters is getting you treated — which is another reason not to soldier on.

If it is getting on top of you

Severe nausea and vomiting is genuinely miserable. It can leave you isolated, unable to work, unable to look after other children, and grieving the pregnancy you expected to have. Feeling low, anxious, or even regretting the pregnancy while you feel this unwell is a **common and understandable** response — not a sign that you don't want your baby.

Please tell us. We would much rather know, and there is support available — practical and emotional. If you find yourself thinking you cannot continue the pregnancy because of how unwell you are, please talk to us before making any decision. That conversation is one we take seriously, and there is usually more we can try.

If in doubt, call. It is always better to ask.

Rooms 03 8400 6193
Urgent after hours 0459 706 061

This sheet is general information and does not replace the advice given to you in person.