

Pregnancy Sickness

Congratulations!! You have just found out that you are expecting a new baby!

There are so many feelings that you are having, so many questions to ask, so much shopping to do, and UUGHHH - your body feels so bad.

Around Week Six of pregnancy, 2/3 of women begin to experience pregnancy sickness, more commonly known as morning sickness. For many women, pregnancy sickness can happen any time of the day. As a matter of fact only about 2% of women experience symptoms in the morning. The term morning sickness actually originated from the idea that upon rising from sleep, the body is depleted of important nutritional resources thus making one more susceptible to queasiness.

While this can be true for some women, it isn't for most. Studies show that an exact reason for pregnancy sickness is not known.

Pregnancy sickness can manifest itself with a myriad of different symptoms. Some symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, extreme fatigue, dizziness, gag reflexes, dry heaves, food aversions, food cravings, food indecision, overwhelming reactions to smells, metallic taste in mouth, hypersalivation, heartburn, and acid reflux. Some moms may vomit only one time while others may vomit repeatedly day after day. Many experience more than one symptom.

The good news about pregnancy sickness is that it is a HEALTHY response to pregnancy. Even though it doesn't feel good and you may think that the days of pregnancy sickness are some of the very worst days of your life, it is actually a sign that your pregnancy is strong and proceeding along normally.

For the generally healthy mom, pregnancy sickness generally doesn't last much longer than the first trimester. Some women will have only a short period while the occasional

woman may experience it the entire pregnancy. According to some physicians, the actual time frame for symptoms to totally disappear is 17-18 weeks.

Pregnancy sickness that lasts longer should be discussed with your midwife because it may be an indication of thyroid problems.

There is a popular theory derived from research by Margie Profet that suggests that pregnancy sickness is a response from the body to protect the fetus from foods that would be considered toxic. These toxic substances are called teratogens. Teratogens are anything that can cause birth defects. Many times the food aversions that are experienced are toward things that we already know could cause problems. Some of these might include alcoholic beverages and caffeine products.

Other food aversions might include things that are more subtle such as strong vegetables or heavy meats. Strong vegetables would be considered broccoli, spinach, cabbage, etc. Possibly the phytochemicals in these vegetables would be the culprits. Whatever the aversion might be, pregnancy sickness demands that women listen to their bodies.



One of the most intriguing symptoms of pregnancy sickness is "hyperolfaction." This is an extremely heightened sense of smell. "The nose knows!" Most of the physical complaints of pregnancy sickness begins with the nose. Lots of "smells" that have previously been enjoyed can't be tolerated during these few weeks of pregnancy sickness. Morning sickness STINKS!

It is interesting to note that there are seven cultures in the world that experience absolutely no pregnancy sickness. These cultures have diets that are predominantly corn-based. On the other hand, Japanese women experience the highest rate of pregnancy sickness and their diet is based on fish and shellfish, which carry a lot of bacteria.

A woman contemplating pregnancy can look at her history to predict whether or not she will be prone to pregnancy sickness. Research shows that ALL women who experience motion sickness will have pregnancy sickness. This leads some researchers to believe that becoming pregnant temporarily alters the vestibular system or the center for

balance in the body. This could explain why some of the common remedies that are tried for pregnancy sickness are ones that are also tried for motion sickness.

One of the symptoms of pregnancy sickness that is the most important to consider is depression. The weeks of pregnancy sickness are a very lonely time. Even though it is a temporary thing, many women experience chronic symptoms. Women feel isolated and are afraid that being sick will hurt their babies. Pregnancy sickness involves an almost total loss of control. The best thing to do is to keep communication lines open. Try to find a friend who is going through the same thing and share your feelings with her. Educate those around you so that they understand what is happening. Your husband will feel totally helpless and education for him is extremely important. He will want to help out any way that he can.

Once a mom jumps over the hurdle of pregnancy sickness and begins to eat again and feel better, it is amazing how fast she will forget how bad those pregnancy sickness symptoms were. It is vitally important to remember that it is almost unheard of for a fetus to suffer adverse effects, regardless of the degree of pregnancy sickness. As stated earlier, pregnancy sickness is normal and even healthy. No matter how bad you are feeling, try to remember that you really AREN'T sick.

A good book to read about this subject is *THE MORNING SICKNESS COMPANION* written by Elizabeth Kaledin. Some of the information included in this handout is from that book. This book will help you to look at pregnancy sickness in a different and more humorous light.

Finally, remember to LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. Eating, resting, and periodic exercise are the only things that really seem to help. Don't try to be Superwoman! Let those around you help you. Try to focus on the exciting time ahead of you when your precious baby is born. ENJOY your pregnancy!



IMPORTANT KEYS TO PREGNANCY SICKNESS

- Pregnancy sickness is normal.
- It is rare for pregnancy sickness to last longer than 12-14 weeks.
- It is almost unheard of for babies to experience adverse affects from pregnancy sickness, regardless of the degree.
- Education is vitally important, especially for the husband.
- Calories in any form are far more important than balancing your diet in early pregnancy.
- Stay hydrated - drink whatever stays down.
- There are very few things that can harm you or your baby.
- Carbohydrate-containing foods are often the most helpful. Some of these are potatoes, bagels, breads, plain pastas, and crackers.
- There is evidence from research that the herb, GINGER, works. You may drink ginger tea, soak in ginger baths, nibble on gingersnaps, drink ginger ale, or take ginger capsules. It is safe to take up to 20 capsules per day. Take 2 capsules every hour until nausea is better.
- B-6 or B-Complex vitamins may help.
- Try to sleep whenever possible. Fatigue makes symptoms worse, especially in the evening.
- Women with the worst symptoms have been shown to have the healthiest pregnancies and have more girl babies.
- Although it is normal to feel great during the early weeks of pregnancy, sometimes it can be a sign of an unhealthy pregnancy.
- There are more than thirty hormones that are involved in maintaining a pregnancy. Some of this hormonal activity can possibly be related to pregnancy sickness.

- The emotional toll from pregnancy sickness can be overwhelming. Keep the lines of communication open. Talk to your husband, a friend, and your midwife.
- Unless you are very overweight, you should be GAINING weight during pregnancy, not losing weight. Hyperemesis gravidarum is an extreme form of pregnancy sickness that does not allow you to keep anything down. If you are losing weight, talk with your midwife.
- Pregnancy sickness is found more often in first pregnancies and multiple gestations.
- Beware of smells that start the cycle of pregnancy sickness symptoms. Have a smell-free zone in your home.
- There are antiemetic medications to help with nausea. Talk with your midwife about them if you are having extreme symptoms.
- The best remedy for pregnancy sickness is EATING. Keep something in your stomach at all times.
- Try to choose foods that won't be horrible coming back up.
- Fruit and fruit juices are very helpful.
- Try not to put extreme temperatures into your stomach. Room temperature foods and drinks tend to do better. However, you may find that you love Popsicles!
- Keep a food diary so that you know what works well for you.
- Many women feel no symptoms during a period of exercise.
- Never take prenatal vitamins on an empty stomach. Taking them at night may help.
- If your regular prenatal vitamin makes you sick, try Flintstone's vitamins - they supply 50% of the RDA. You may try Vitaball - vitamin gum as well.
- If you just can't tolerate vitamins, eat TOTAL cereal. It provides 100% RDA of major vitamins and minerals.
- Pack a Pregnancy Sickness Survival Kit and take it with you everywhere you go. You might include crackers, gingersnaps, pretzels, orange slices, apple, nuts, cereal, yogurt, carrots, celery sticks, drinks that are soothing, and any other food item that you have found to be helpful. Also pack a spoon, napkins, and wet wipes. You may want to have a "barf bag" included just in case you are caught off-guard.

- Read the book *THE MORNING SICKNESS COMPANION* by Elizabeth Kaledin.
- Check out the website www.motherisk.org or call them at 1-800-436-8477.
- ENJOY YOUR PREGNANCY!

