

## **Nausea and Vomiting**

*Adapted from "Morning Sickness", ACOG Patient Education Pamphlet, 2001*

Nausea and vomiting are common complaints during pregnancy, especially during the first part of pregnancy. This is often called "morning sickness," although it can occur at any time of the day.

Most cases of nausea and vomiting are not harmful. When nausea and vomiting are severe and persist, though, they can affect your health.

### **What Causes Nausea?**

While you are pregnant, nausea and vomiting can occur as your body goes through many changes. Although no one is certain what causes the nausea and vomiting, rising levels of hormones during pregnancy may play a role. In most women, symptoms of nausea and vomiting are mild and go away after the middle of pregnancy. But some cases of nausea and vomiting are severe. This condition is called hyperemesis gravidarum. It can lead to loss of weight and body fluids.

### **Effects on Pregnancy**

Most mild cases of nausea and vomiting do not harm you or your baby's health. Morning sickness does not mean your baby is sick. Morning sickness can become more of a problem if you can't keep any foods or fluids down and begin to lose weight. If your nausea and vomiting are severe, call your doctor.

### **What You Can Do**

Until the nausea and vomiting go away, there are some things you can do that might help you feel better:

- Get up slowly in the morning and sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes.
- Eat dry toast or crackers before you get out of bed in the morning.
- Get plenty of fresh air. Take a short walk or try sleeping with a window open.
- Drink fluids often during the day. Herbal teas and cold drinks that are bubbly or sweet may help.
- Eat five or six small meals each day. Try not to let your stomach get empty, and sit upright after meals.
- Avoid smells that bother you.
- Eat foods that are low fat and easy to digest. The BRATT diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, toast, and tea) may help. This diet will provide vital nutrients that will replace what you have lost.

Prenatal vitamins and iron may cause nausea. A children's chewable vitamin with folate (folic acid) taken at the end of the day may help. Ginger, acupuncture, motion sickness bands, or hypnosis also may help relieve symptoms. Talk with your doctor before taking any medication or trying any treatment.

## **Medical Treatment**

If your nausea and vomiting are severe, you may need medical treatment. If your doctor suspects that you have hyperemesis gravidarum, you may need to stay in the hospital for a while.

Your doctor may give you fluids through an intravenous (IV) line. You also may be treated with anti-nausea medications. In most cases, you will not be allowed to eat any food until the vomiting stops. Your doctor may suggest that you rest in a dimly lit room where it is quiet and private. This type of treatment in the hospital often relieves symptoms.