



Morning Sickness

Morning sickness refers to nausea and vomiting and affects a large population of pregnant women during their first trimester. The term “morning sickness” is actually a misnomer as in fact nausea can occur at any time of day. It generally occurs between the 4th and 14th week of pregnancy, but some women may experience it for longer. Morning sickness is not harmful to the unborn baby, but severe morning sickness (known as hyperemesis gravidarum) can cause dehydration and dizziness, and may require hospitalisation for treatment with anti-nausea medication and IV fluid. If you suspect that you may be suffering hyperemesis gravidarum, it is important to discuss this with your obstetrician.

Causes

The exact cause of morning sickness is unknown, but many metabolic and physical factors are known to play a role. Some of these are:

- Hormonal changes during pregnancy (high oestrogen levels)
- Blood pressure fluctuations (especially low blood pressure)
- Change in the metabolism of carbohydrates
- Chemical and physical changes
- Traveling, fatigue, emotional stress, and some foods

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms of morning sickness include:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Depression and anxiety
- Diagnosis

Your doctor will diagnose morning sickness based on the signs and symptoms you experience. If hyperemesis gravidarum is

suspected, the next step is to undergo urine and blood tests. An ultrasound may also be ordered to investigate underlying causes.

Treatment

Most cases of morning sickness do not require treatment; however, your doctor may prescribe Vitamin B6 supplements and anti-nausea medications for severe cases.

Hyperemesis gravidarum may require hospitalization and treatment with anti-nausea medications and intravenous fluids.

Lifestyle Modifications and Home Remedies

Lifestyle and home remedies may be helpful in relieving morning sickness in some women. Below are some suggestions to try:

- Choose your food carefully. You should eat more carbohydrate-rich, easily digestible foods. Salty food or food containing ginger may be helpful at times. Snack at regular intervals throughout the day instead of having large meals. Eating a few plain sweet biscuits or dry crackers after waking up may help reduce the nauseous feeling. Avoid food that triggers nausea or makes it worse, such as greasy and spicy food.
- Consume plenty of fluids. Keep sipping ginger flavoured drinks or water frequently. Sucking on ice cubes or hard candy may be beneficial.
- Take walks and try and get plenty of fresh air.

Prevention

Morning sickness can be reduced to a certain extent with prenatal vitamins taken before conception. Speak to your doctor about prenatal vitamins if you are planning to get pregnant.