



## Women's Diagnostic Unit

# Morning Sickness

## A patients guide

### What is morning sickness?

- We often call the feeling of sickness and vomiting (throwing up) that happens during pregnancy "morning sickness."
- We do not know exactly why it happens, but it is believed to be connected to the hormone changes that occur during pregnancy.
- It is normal to feel and be sick in pregnancy. It happens to about 70/80% of all pregnancies.
- The symptoms usually start about six weeks after the last period and usually stop by the 14th week of pregnancy. It is rare for the sickness to continue past the 14<sup>th</sup> week, but sometimes it does and can last throughout the whole pregnancy.
- Not all pregnancies experience morning sickness, and it can be different for everyone.
- Some common signs are feeling sick, throwing up, feeling tired, getting headaches, and feeling dizzy.
- Morning sickness will not harm your baby, but it can be distressing for you.

### What are the signs and symptoms of morning sickness

- Nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (throwing up) that happens more than three or four times a day
- Unable to keep down food or water
- Losing weight
- Becoming very tired, dizzy or fainting
- Not urinating very often, or your urine is concentrated (lower amount of urine than usual)
- Experiencing headaches and sometimes, confusion
- Heart palpitations (heartbeats that become noticeable)
- Unable to swallow saliva (spit)
- Skin becoming pale and dry

### Hospital treatment

- If you are frequently throwing up, you can get dehydrated (lose too much water and salts from your body) and lose weight. This is called **hyperemesis gravidarum**, and it is something to be concerned about.
- If you are unable to keep minimal food or drink down, and begin to lose a lot of weight, you should immediately see your doctor (GP) or go to the women's diagnostic unit (WDU) on Betty Mansell ward for a check-up.



### What can you expect from the hospital?

- We will ask you to give a urine sample and you will be asked to fill out an assessment for dehydration.
- If for this pregnancy, you have not had an ultrasound scan (a scan that creates pictures of the inside of your body), we might want to do one to make sure there is only one baby growing inside you (a single, intrauterine pregnancy). Hyperemesis can be more common if you are having twins. We might also take blood tests to make sure your kidneys and liver are working properly.
- The treatment will be based on how bad your symptoms are and what the test results show. It might include:
  - Dietary advice to get you eating again.
  - Anti-sickness tablets to take home that reduce your feelings of sickness and vomiting (throwing up)
  - Tablets which contain vitamin B6 (Thiamine 25 – 50 mg). Lacking this vitamin can cause morning sickness.
  - Anti-sickness medication by injection.
  - Intravenous fluids – These are liquids that go directly into your body through a small tube inserted into a vein. Usually this is done in the women's diagnostic unit and managed by seeing you daily, rather than you being admitted to hospital.
  - Very occasionally and in severe cases, steroid therapy may be required, and you may need to be admitted to hospital.

### What will happen if you do not get treatment?

- If your symptoms are mild the sickness might go away by itself. However, if you keep throwing up or are unable to eat or drink enough, it is important to ask a doctor for help. They can make sure you do not get dehydrated and can help you feel better.

### Tips on how to prevent or manage morning sickness

- Make sure you are getting enough rest, as tiredness can make it worse.
- Try to keep eating and drinking. Eat and drink little and often ensuring you don't overeat.
- Often, meals that are high in carbohydrates, such as bread, are tolerated better than sweet or spicy foods.
- If you are producing too much saliva, suck or drink fresh lemon or lime.
- Avoid brushing your teeth immediately after eating.
- Wear comfortable clothes that are not tight around the waist.
- Try to have frequent physical exercise such as walking.
- Distract yourself, the more you think about feeling sick, the worse you will feel.
- You can have acupuncture sessions in the hospital to help you manage the sickness.

**Note:** Avoid ginger if you are taking any prescribed medications, particularly blood thinning drugs such as aspirin or medication for high blood pressure.



### Useful websites

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/morning-sickness-nausea.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/morning-sickness-nausea.aspx)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/severe-vomiting-in-pregnancy-hyperemesis-gravidarum.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/severe-vomiting-in-pregnancy-hyperemesis-gravidarum.aspx)

[www.patient.co.uk/health/sickness-and-vomiting-in-pregnancy](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/sickness-and-vomiting-in-pregnancy)

### Further questions?

If you have any further questions, please contact our women's diagnostic unit, where we will be happy to help.

### Women's diagnostic unit

Betty Mansell

Open Monday to Friday from 8am - 6pm.

Tel: 020 7288 3786

### Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or [whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net)

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email [whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net). We will try our best to meet your need.

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