

# Dealing with Nausea and Vomiting in the First Trimester of Pregnancy

*The first trimester...UGH! Why do I feel so crappy??*

The first trimester of pregnancy can be very difficult for many women. You don't feel pregnant. There's no belly there yet. You can't feel any baby kicking. You just feel TIRED, emotional, and YUCKY. Not Fair! So what's going on with this?? It's all about the HCG – Human Chorionic Gonadotropin, or the pregnancy hormone that your body is cranking out to get your pregnancy well established as your body builds the placenta that will take over much of the work in a few weeks. While HCG levels are high, your tummy is extra sensitive to stomach acid and gets easily upset. Frequent nausea and occasional vomiting is normal in the first trimester. However, there ARE ways to make it better!

Tips for handling nausea and vomiting in the first trimester.

## ∞ NEVER LET YOURSELF GET HUNGRY

It's important to always have a little something in your stomach. Snack every 2 hours that you are awake and try to eat normal meals when possible. Eat what appeals to you. The hungrier you are, the worse the nausea will get and the more likely you will be to vomit the next time you eat. So, don't let yourself get too hungry! Carry snacks and drinks with you everywhere! Invest in some healthy easy snacks – like nuts, granola bars, cheese sticks, fruit, etc.

## ∞ STAY WELL HYDRATED

Even if you aren't able to eat much, keep yourself hydrated with water. If water doesn't appeal to you, other drinks are OK too, such as sports drinks (NOT energy drinks). Just avoid acidic drinks like orange or grapefruit juice, sodas, diet sodas, and coffee. Skim milk can be very soothing to the stomach. A little tea is OK, but make sure it isn't too strong. Try to avoid very sweet drinks. You should try for approximately 1 gallon of total fluids per day. Some women find it easier to drink after they eat first. Try to get most of your fluids between meals and snacks. Sip a little at a time, throughout the day.

## ∞ DON'T GET OUT OF BED IN THE MORNING WITHOUT HAVING A SNACK FIRST

One great way to avoid morning sickness...and a whole day of ickiness to follow is to be prepared. Set a glass of water and some crackers or a granola bar next to your bed at night before you go to bed. When you wake up in the morning – don't move yet! Gingerly reach over and take a few sips of water and eat a few crackers while still resting in bed. Lay back down and rest for another 5-10 minutes until the crackers absorb some of the acid in your stomach. Then SLOWLY get up and move. Eat breakfast as soon as you can.

## ∞ TAKE YOUR PRENATAL VITAMIN WITH FOOD

And never on an empty stomach. Some women find it helpful to have a snack before bedtime and take their prenatal vitamin then. That way they can already be asleep if there is any stomach upset. There are other formulations of prenatal vitamins that you can buy that the pharmacy or grocery store that can work too if you can't tolerate the prenatal vitamin your provider prescribed. Just check the ingredients and make sure they are made by a reputable company. You want a minimum of 400mcg (micrograms) of folic acid or folate per day. This helps prevent some birth defects.

## ∞ GINGER

It can really help! Ginger Ale is a good option (but not too much, it's very sweet). Try to choose the kind that actually contains real ginger root, not artificial flavoring. Other ways to use ginger is the chew ginger candies (real ginger containing) or make your own ginger tea. Buy ginger root, peel the rind off and slice into thin slices. Drop the ginger slices in a pitcher of water and let it soak in the fridge. The ginger flavored water is low in sugar and great for nausea! If you hate the taste of ginger, you can take it as a supplement, up to 250mg per day of ginger supplement is safe.

## ∞ SLEEP

One of the defining characteristics of the first trimester for most women is being very, very tired all the time. The call of the couch is strong! It's OK to give in. Go ahead and sleep. Just make sure you try to snack a little first and have your snacks close at hand to nibble as soon as you wake up. And when you have enough energy, try to get some exercise.

## ∞ FOODS

Better food for dealing with nausea and vomiting are plain and primarily carbohydrates. Some good options are: bagels, baked potatoes, bananas, bread, crackers, cream of wheat, dry cereal, mashed potatoes, oatmeal, pears, plain noodles, and plain rice. (Once you start feeling better, scale back on these foods. They are not very nutritious in general and are high in calories. You don't want to gain too much weight in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester.) Avoid fatty or oily food – they often make symptoms worse. Spicy or acidic foods can also be hard to tolerate.

## ∞ MEDICATIONS:

- Vitamin B6 – Tripler has 50mg tabs or you can buy them at any pharmacy. Break the tablets in half and take by mouth in divided doses (25mg) 3 times a day (maximum dose is 75mg per day). It works best if you take smaller doses more often (i.e. 3 times a day) but if you can't remember to do that, you could just take 1 tablet in the morning and half a tablet in the evening instead. It will take a few days for the Vitamin B6 to work well, so give it at least a week to get the best effect. Continue taking it until about 13-14 weeks gestation or when you are feeling better. Very safe in pregnancy and is first line treatment.
- Unisom Sleep Tabs (Doxylamine Succinate 25mg) – You will have to buy this at the pharmacy or grocery store – we do not carry this in the Tripler Pharmacy. It's important to check the ingredients list on the Unisom label – they make some with Doxylamine Succinate and another kind with a different medication. You want the one with doxylamine succinate (very important)! Take ½ to 1 tab with 1/2 tab of Vitamin B6 by mouth at bedtime. Although it's a sleep aid, that one little pill really helps with the nausea throughout the following day. It's very safe and is a first line treatment for nausea in pregnancy. Make sure you have at least 8 hours available between the time you take it and when you need to be awake and alert because you may still be sleepy.

There are other medications that can help with nausea if you've tried all of the remedies listed and they haven't helped, but you need to speak to your provider before getting a prescription.

### *When is pregnancy vomiting too much vomiting?*

Some women get very severe nausea and vomiting in the first trimester and it can even continue throughout the pregnancy. This is called hyperemesis gravidarum. If you are unable to keep any food or fluids down for 24 hours, you might have this problem. Hydration is very important in pregnancy and if you are unable to keep enough fluids in your stomach you can become very dehydrated and this is dangerous. Watch your urine – if your urine is getting dark yellow (except for right after you take your prenatal vitamin) or if you are not peeing much at all, this is another sign that you are getting dehydrated. Dehydration also causes dizziness and exhaustion. It is very important that you come into the hospital for evaluation and treatment if this is happening. Don't wait until your next clinic appointment for treatment, **THIS CAN BE AN EMERGENCY**. If you've tried all of the vomiting prevention and management steps discussed above and you are still unable to keep down food and fluids, please come in for evaluation.

If you are **less than 20 weeks gestation**, please use our Same Day Evaluation Clinic (SDEC), but if it is nighttime or on the weekend, go to the Emergency Room. If you are **20 weeks gestation or more**, go to Labor and Deliver on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor F-wing for evaluation, they are open 24 hours a day.

**OB CLINIC HOURS: MON, WED, THU, FRI from 0800-1500 and TUE from 0800-1200**