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Morning Sickness

What is morning sickness?

Morning sickness is nausea or vomiting that usually occurs during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. More than half of pregnant women have morning sickness during the first trimester. It usually goes away by the second trimester, when the level of pregnancy hormones in your body falls.

When morning sickness is severe it is called hyperemesis gravidarum.

How does it occur?

It is not understood why some women develop morning sickness, but hormones appear to be involved. Women with high levels of pregnancy hormones tend to develop this condition and have it in subsequent pregnancies. It is also more common among women who are pregnant with more than one baby (such as twins or triplets).

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of severe morning sickness include:

- Persistent vomiting shortly after eating or drinking anything, including water
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Concentrated, dark-colored urine.

How is it diagnosed?

The doctor will review your symptoms and may do lab tests of your blood and urine. Your blood may be tested for chemical imbalance. The urine may be examined for concentration and the presence of ketones (a substance that comes from the breakdown of body fat). The doctor may examine you and use more blood tests to rule out other conditions that might cause vomiting.

How is it treated?

Your treatment may include changes in both diet and medications prescribed by the doctor. If your morning sickness is severe, you may need to go to the hospital for treatment that will stop you from becoming dehydrated.

Mild morning sickness can be relieved by:

- Eating foods with no fiber that are high in carbohydrates and low in fat
- Having frequent small snacks instead of full meals
- Eating foods that taste good to you
- Eating before you get out of bed, as movement often makes morning sickness worse
- Drinking salty fluids, such as broth, cola, and Gatorade.
- Some women find that drinking peppermint tea relieves their symptoms (frequent small sips prevent dehydration). Even if liquids stay down just an hour, a lot is absorbed