



Coping with “morning sickness”

Sickness affects up to 90% of expectant mums, occurs any time, day or night, & may last much longer than the first 3 months. Being tired, hungry or anxious or expecting more than one baby makes it worse. Heartburn, food cravings or aversions, excess saliva & headaches often accompany sickness. In approximately 2-3% of women it becomes severe (hyperemesis gravidarum), which usually requires you to be admitted to hospital. It's caused by hormones but may also be linked to thyroid problems, gut infection or neck or back problems. If you're prone to travel sickness it's usually worse due to effects on the balancing mechanism in your ear.

Experiment with what you eat & don't get too hungry. Don't feel guilty about not eating a nourishing diet – anything is better than nothing. Avoid fried, fatty, spicy foods. Carbohydrates eg bread, potatoes, cereal, pasta help maintain energy levels. Some mums benefit from vitamin B6 and zinc supplements. Get as much rest as possible & take time off work if you can – there's no point in pushing yourself to the limit. Relaxation & exercise such as Tai ch'i, Qi Gong, yoga, listening to music or meditating may help if anxiety & stress make your sickness worse.

Acupressure wristbands (*Seabands*™) have been found in many research studies to be effective for relieving sickness. A special audiotape which acts on the balancing mechanism in your ear may help if sickness is worse when you're in the car - contact www.morningwell.com. Osteopathy, chiropractic, acupuncture, reflexology or hypnotherapy may also help but ensure the practitioner is experienced in treating pregnant mums.

Ginger is a well-known remedy for sickness but it is not suitable – or safe – for everyone. Ginger may make the nausea worse & cause heartburn. It's *generally* safe in pregnancy but if you need it for more than 3 weeks, inform your doctor because prolonged use can affect blood clotting. **Avoid ginger if you are taking any prescribed medications, particularly blood thinning drugs including aspirin, or tablets for high blood pressure.** Ginger biscuits and ginger beer are *not* the answer – root ginger tea or capsules from the health store are the safest & most effective. If ginger doesn't work or makes the sickness worse, try peppermint tea (unless you have epilepsy, a heart condition, or are taking homeopathic remedies). Camomile tea can also work for some mums, or herbal tablets such as slippery elm, but it is best to consult a qualified herbalist about these. Homeopathic remedies work differently from herbal medicines & must be prescribed exactly for your precise symptoms. **Always inform your midwife if you are using any complementary therapies or taking natural remedies.**

Expectancy has an interactive CD ROM on *Coping with Sickness in Pregnancy* with more suggestions to help you feel better, as well as information about medical treatments if the condition gets worse.

Leaflet written by Denise Tiran, Expectancy's Director, and intended as a general guide only