

Nausea and Vomiting in Pregnancy

Date:	
Dietitian Contact Number:	01 817 2550
Day Assessment Unit Number:	01 817 2524
Emergency dept number:	1800 522 687

What is Hyperemesis Gravidarum?

Hyperemesis Gravidarum (HG) is a severe form of nausea and vomiting in pregnancy. It is not typical “morning sickness”. You may feel sick all day and vomit many times in a day. You may not be able to eat or drink normally and your symptoms may affect your day to day activities.

What causes it?

It is not known why some women have HG and others do not. Research shows that hormonal changes contribute to the condition and genetics may be another factor. If your mother, grandmother or sister experienced HG, you are more likely to suffer from it. Having HG in a previous pregnancy can increase your chance of having it again. This means getting supports and medication early on is very important.

How do I manage it?

Severe nausea and vomiting may cause malnutrition, weight loss and dehydration. It can also be an isolating and helpless time for you and your family and friends.

The good news is there are many things that you can do to improve your symptoms and to help yourself feel better. HG is not likely to harm your baby if you get the treatment and support you need.

This booklet contains information on managing HG, to help support a healthy pregnancy and provide your baby with the best start in life.



Management of Hyperemesis

Management of HG includes:



Medicine



Fluids



Food



Coping strategies



**Know when to
ask for help**

1. Anti-sickness medicine

There are many safe anti-sickness medicines that can be taken in pregnancy. Some options may work better for you than others. Talk to your obstetrician, midwife or GP about available medicines.

It is important to **always take medications as prescribed** by your doctor. Some medications work to relieve your symptoms when you feel sick. Others need to be taken regularly to prevent you feeling sick.

If your prescription is not helping you to feel better, **ask if you can try a different one** or a combination that may work better for you.

If **reflux** or **heartburn** is an issue you can take Rennie or Gaviscon or talk to your doctor about getting a prescription medication to help.

If you are feeling better and thinking about stopping your medication, it is important that you do not stop your medication suddenly, as your symptoms may come back. Instead, gradually reduce your medication one tablet at a time. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist for more advice.



All anti-sickness medicines are covered by the **Drugs Payments scheme** or **Medical Card scheme**.

If you need any further information or support with any of these schemes, please discuss with your doctor or pharmacist.

2. Drinking Enough Fluids

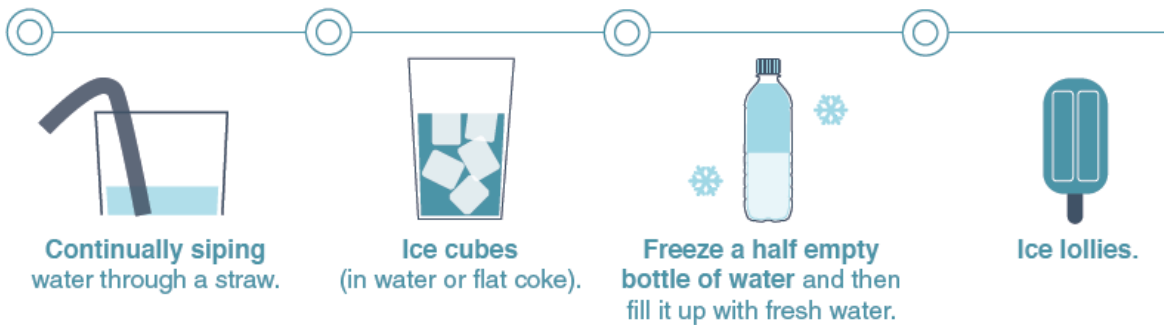
Staying hydrated by drinking enough fluids can help you feel better and avoid you becoming dehydrated.

Aim to drink a minimum of **11 cups of fluid each day**, that's roughly **100-200mls fluid every hour**.

1 cup like this is 200ml



Try drinking water in different ways



Try flavoured fluids instead of water



Try eating foods with a higher water content



Pale yellow urine means you are well-hydrated. The darker your urine, the more risk there is to be dehydrated. If you are dehydrated, drink more fluids. If you can't, contact the hospital.

3. Eating enough food when you are unwell

Once you are properly hydrated, the next step is to eat enough to keep your energy up and prevent weight loss. Don't worry if your diet is not the best while you are sick. Focus on eating foods you like and feel like eating.

The following tips might help improve your intake and reduce your symptoms.

Eat little and often throughout the day

- Try eating **6-7 small meals/snacks** and sip on fluids throughout the day. It may also help to have food and drinks separately.
- **Eat something within 30 minutes of waking.** For some women, it may help to take your anti-sickness tablets, eat something small (e.g. a cracker) and wait 15-20 minutes before getting up.
- **Eat before you feel hungry** and stop eating when you feel full. Not letting your stomach get too empty helps you feel better.
- **Have food prepared** in advance (sandwiches, ready meals, frozen cooked meals) and **keep your cupboard stocked** with easy meals e.g. cheese and crackers, eggs/beans on toast, tinned soup, noodles.

If you can't tolerate a pregnancy multivitamin:

- ✓ Liquid or gummy forms may be easier to tolerate (for example Pregnacare ® gummies or liquid; Bassetts ® pregnancy vitamin chewy pastilles).
- ✓ Alternatively, choose individual folic acid (400ug) and vitamin D (10ug) supplements and take them later in the day to avoid worsening nausea in the morning.

Experiment with different flavours and textures:

Flavours and texture may affect what you can eat. If you can manage one food from the lists below, you may be able to manage others.

Salty Foods

- ✓ Mashed potatoes or noodles with salt/
- ✓ Thin slices of fresh ham/cheese
- ✓ Toasted cheese sandwich
- ✓ Popcorn / crisps / nachos
- ✓ Vegetable/ chicken soup

Dry Foods

- ✓ Bread/ toast
- ✓ Crackers/ oatcakes/ rice cakes
- ✓ Cookies/ biscuits
- ✓ Cereals without milk
- ✓ Dried fruit
- ✓ Flapjacks/ cereal bars

Sweet foods

- ✓ Cakes
- ✓ Fresh fruit/ tinned fruit/ dried fruit
- ✓ Ice cream/ sorbet
- ✓ Sweet breakfast cereal/ cereal with dried fruit
- ✓ Jelly
- ✓ Porridge with sugar/honey
- ✓ Flapjacks/ cereal bars

Bland/Mild Foods

- ✓ Potatoes/ rice / noodles
- ✓ Custard or Rice pudding
- ✓ Porridge
- ✓ White toast or plain bagel
- ✓ Cream crackers
- ✓ Pancakes/ waffle/ French toast
- ✓ Plain yogurt/ ice-cream
- ✓ Plain scones / croissant

Getting enough protein:

Many women struggle with aversions to protein-rich foods such as meat and dairy. If you cannot tolerate these foods right now, try some alternative foods to meet your protein needs:

- Cold cooked chicken /ham
- Shredded chicken/tinned fish through pasta
- Toasted sandwich (cheese, meat, chicken)
- Eggs, omelette, French toast
- Baked beans, vegetable burgers & falafel, chickpea curry, lentil soup
- Nuts, nut butters, cheese and cheese spread
- Yogurt, yogurt drinks, milk, protein milk, flavoured milk, fortified soya milk & soya yogurt, oat/nut milk.

4. Coping strategies

- **Get organized** and **rest when you can**. Nausea may be worse in the morning and tiredness can make you feel worse. Try to prepare things the night before. Many women may need time off work or reduced working hours. Discuss this with your doctor.



- **Ask for and accept help** (e.g. shopping, cooking and cleaning). This will help you cope better and rest more.

- **Remove strong smells** from your home that make you feel sick. If cooking makes you sick, choose to make cold foods or get out of the kitchen when others are cooking.



- This can be a very lonely time when you are stuck at home and feeling unwell. If you are feeling sad or low **talk to a friend** about how you feel or call our **Mental Health team** on **01-8730632** for extra support.
- **Contact support groups**, such as:



Hyperemesis Ireland



<https://www.hyperemesis.ie>



<https://twitter.com/HyperemesisEire>



<https://www.facebook.com/hyperemesisireland/>

Pregnancy Sickness Support



<https://www.pregnancysicknesssupport.org.uk/>



<https://x.com/hgsupportuk>



<https://www.facebook.com/PregnancySicknessSupport>

Survival kit for going out and about:

Being out in public, in a car, bus or train can be a challenge when you feel sick. It helps to carry some essentials with you:

- ✓ Small leak-proof bags in case you vomit
- ✓ Cleansing wipes for face and hands
- ✓ A tissue with a nice scent (essential oil or lemon). This can help to block out smells that make you feel ill.
- ✓ Snacks (cereal bars, flapjacks, oat crackers, popcorn, nuts)
- ✓ Bottle of water or carton of juice
- ✓ Mints, hard boiled sweets or chewing gum

5. Know when to ask for help



There may be times when you need to have your medications adjusted or may need some extra fluids and vitamins through I.V. (intravenous drip). It can be difficult to know when you are “sick enough” to come into hospital or when to ask for extra help.

By monitoring your symptoms, hydration and weight at home you can seek help early and potentially avoid admission to the ward.

Signs that you may need extra help:

- Worsening nausea and vomiting score (see next page).
- Difficulty holding down food or fluid (if you can't hold down any food or fluid, come in to the Emergency Room).
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Dark coloured urine or passing less urine. The darker your urine, the more risk there is to becoming dehydrated.
- Losing weight (see next page)
- You are not eating enough or only managing to eat limited foods.

To get extra support and schedule an appointment:

- Call the **Day Assessment** Unit on 01-8172524
- Call the **Emergency Department** for urgent concerns or out of hours assessments
- Call the **Dietitian** on 01-8172551 (Mon-Fri 11.30-4pm)

Monitoring your nausea and vomiting score (PUQE score)¹¹:

You can use these questions to score your symptoms. If your score is over 7, phone the Day Assessment Unit or Emergency Room for guidance.

Circle the answer that best suits your situation in the last 24 hours

1. On average in a day, for how long do you feel nauseated or sick to your stomach?

>6 hours 5 points	4–6 hours 4 points	2–3 hours 3 points	≤1 hour 2 points	Not at all 1 point
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2. On average in a day, how many times do you vomit or throw up?

≥7 times 5 points	5–6 times 4 points	3–4 times 3 points	1–2 times 2 points	Not at all 1 point
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3. On average in a day, how many times have you had retching or dry heaves without bringing anything up?

≥7 times 5 points	5–6 times 4 points	3–4 times 3 points	1–2 times 2 points	Not at all 1 point
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Total score (sum of replies to 1, 2 and 3): mild NVP ≤6; moderate NVP, 7–12; severe NVP ≥13.

Monitoring your weight at home:

Try to check your weight at home every 1-2 weeks.



A healthy rate of weight gain in pregnancy (2nd and 3rd trimester) is:

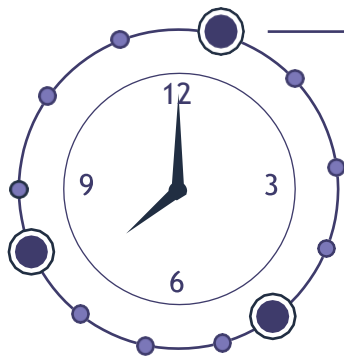
- **0.4 - 0.5kg each week** if you pre-pregnancy **BMI is under 25**
- **0.2kg each week** if your pre-pregnancy **BMI is over 25**

Week of pregnancy	Weight	Weight change

Healthy Eating when you are feeling better

Once your symptoms improve or settle, aim to eat a healthy, balanced diet from a variety of foods to help baby's growth and development.

- 1 Eat **regular meals and snacks** to help prevent hunger, which is often followed by nausea:



Plan 3 meals spaced 4-5 hours apart

Snack every 1-2 hours between meals

- 2 Eat some wholegrains at main meals for a steady release of **energy**.

- o Choose wholegrain breads, breakfast cereals, brown/basmati rice, wholewheat /egg noodles and new potatoes (with skins).



- 3 Eat **protein** at all main meals for your baby's growth & development.

- o Choose lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, beans and nuts.
- o Avoid fatty meats or processed meat.
- o Choose healthy cooking methods.



- 4 Eat 3-5 **dairy** per day for calcium and iodine

- o Choose low-fat or full-fat milk, yoghurts and suitable cheeses.
- o Choose Vitamin D fortified.
- o Nut and plant milk alternatives (oat, soy, almond) fortified with calcium, iodine and vitamin are suitable alternatives.



- 5 Take a daily pregnancy multivitamin containing **Vitamin D** (10ug or 400IU) to absorb calcium.

- Choose foods rich in vitamin D such as oily fish, (salmon, mackerel, trout), fortified milk or spreads.



- 6 Eat **foods rich in iron** every day to make extra blood cells for your baby.

- Red meat, poultry and oily fish are great sources.
- Eggs, beans, dark green leafy vegetables, dried fruit and fortified cereals also contain iron. These should be eaten with Vitamin C (orange juice, citrus fruit, and tomatoes) to help absorption.



- 7 Eat plenty of **vegetables** & 2-3 pieces of **fruit** for fibre & vitamins.

- Choose fresh, frozen and canned options.
- Soups, juices, smoothies and dried fruit.



- 8 Include some **healthy fats** in your diet for a healthy heart.

- Nuts, seeds, avocado and olive and rapeseed oil
- Omega-3 oils are particularly important for baby's brain development, nervous systems and eyes.
- Try to eat one portion of oily fish (salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines) each week.
- Soya, walnuts and rapeseed oil are good vegetarian alternatives.



Did you know, the Dietitians run a **free 1-hour Nutrition in Pregnancy class** (online) every Wednesday?

Phone (01) 873 0596 to book into the class at any stage in your pregnancy. You'll have an opportunity to speak with the dietitian directly and ask questions.

Notes

Developed by the Dietitians at The Rotunda Hospital

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