



GUIDE



Nutritional guidelines to help control nausea and vomiting during pregnancy



The Ottawa Hospital | L'Hôpital
d'Ottawa



This is general information developed by The Ottawa Hospital. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider who will be able to determine the appropriateness of the information for your specific situation.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Dietitian: _____

Phone number: _____

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Introduction

If you are experiencing nausea early in pregnancy, don't panic. It is caused by hormonal changes that begin from week 4 until around week 15 of pregnancy. Be cautious around the 20th week, since hormones rise again.

With morning sickness you are especially sensitive to food's appearance, texture and/or smell. It is not expected that you will be able to tolerate a balanced diet until the nausea improves. During this time, energy from any foods is acceptable. Give into your cravings.

The purpose of the following guidelines is to help manage nausea and vomiting and allow you to restore optimal nutrition and quality of life during pregnancy.

If at any time during pregnancy you begin to lose a lot of weight or can't keep any foods or fluids down for 24 hours, contact your health care provider immediately.

Risk Factors

About 50–80% of pregnant women experience nausea and vomiting. The following are factors that may put you at a higher risk:

1. pregnant with twins or triplets.
2. history of nausea or vomiting as a side effect of taking birth control pills.
3. history of being susceptible to motion sickness.
4. family history of nausea during pregnancy.

The PUQE scoring system will help you determine your condition.

Answer the following questions by circling your choice.

1. In the last 12 hours, **for how long have you felt nauseated or sick to your stomach?**

Not at all	1 hour or less	2 to 3 hours	4 to 6 hours	More than 6 hours
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

2. In the last 12 hours, **have you vomited or thrown up?**

7 or more times	5 to 6	3 to 4	1 to 2	I did not throw up
(5)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)

3. In the last 12 hours, **how many times have you had retching or dry heaves** without bringing anything up?

No time	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 to 6	7 or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Add the points and see below for your score:

0–6 points = mild

7–12 points = moderate

13 or more points = severe

If your score is ≥ 13 , consult your health care provider.

General Guidelines

1. **Eat small amounts** of foods that appeal to you as soon as you are hungry.
 - Start with a few bites every 15 minutes.
 - When this is working, try a few more bites every 30 minutes, then a few more every 45 minutes.
 - Slowly work your way to mini meals every 2–3 hours.
2. Choose **carbohydrates** (page 6) to help prevent low blood sugar which can cause nausea.
3. Drink plenty of **liquids**, but only very small quantities at a time, **between** meals, rather than with meals. Wait approximately 30 minutes or more after your meal to drink liquids.
4. **Avoid fatty and fried foods**, such as butter, margarine, mayonnaise, bacon, gravies, sauces, salad dressings, crusts, pastries, fried meats, french fries and ice cream. They are hard to digest and may cause nausea.
5. **Avoid highly spiced foods.** Salt to taste and choose seasonings like parsley and thyme to add flavour to your food.
6. Avoid foods and beverages with **strong odours**, such as fish, meat and coffee, that may aggravate symptoms.
7. Avoid **caffeine** – regular coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate.
8. Avoid **very hot** or **very cold** foods and liquids.

Nutritional Considerations

- **Try crackers** or dry toast before getting out of bed in the morning and don't wait too long to have breakfast.
- **Avoid milk and juices** when vomiting is severe. Reintroduce them slowly and chose the better tolerated beverages.
- Sip tea or carbonated beverage frequently to prevent dehydration; suck ice chips or popsicles.
- **Do not mix** solids and liquids (i.e. cereal with milk, stews, soup with crackers).
- **Avoid** favorite foods when you are sick.
- **Try cold foods** instead of hot.
- **Choose poultry and fish** if red meat is unappealing.
- **Introduce ginger** in your diet.
- **Use lemon** – anything lemon-flavored is soothing.
- **Snack before bedtime** or during the night and include high protein choices (eggs, cheese, yogurt, peanut butter, cold lean meats).
- **Take food wherever you go** and try not to have an empty stomach.
- **Try liquid meals** - they are easier to digest and may reduce nausea (see page 9 for "Baby Shake" recipe).
- **Have someone else prepare your meals** and snacks.
- Add 5 ml vanilla to 250 ml of regular tea to produce a "dry" sensation when you have excessive saliva; or suck on hard candy or chew gum.
- **Include more** foods high in **Vitamin B6** (i.e. watermelon, baked potato, bananas, turkey breast).

Other Considerations

- ▶ **Avoid strong odours** (i.e. cooking foods, cleaning agents, heavy perfumes) and carry fresh mint or lemon to mask odours.
- ▶ **Get fresh air** as much as possible by taking a short walk or opening a window; this also helps get rid of odours.
- ▶ **Sit upright** after meals instead of lying down.
- ▶ **Avoid brushing your teeth** immediately after eating – try a fruit flavoured children’s toothpaste or dip your toothbrush in mouthwash.
- ▶ **Rest and relax** more often with feet up and head slightly elevated. Fatigue seems to worsen nausea and vomiting.
- ▶ **Try different activities** to keep your mind occupied (i.e. needlework, reading, puzzles, listen to music).
- ▶ **Continue your prenatal vitamins**; if they affect your nausea/vomiting, take them at bedtime.
- ▶ **Acupressure**, on the wrists, is safe and has shown to reduce symptoms.
- ▶ **Minimize or eliminate other triggers:**
 - blinking or bright lights
 - pressure on abdomen
 - noise (tv, kids)
 - standing for too long
 - motion
 - empty stomach

Suggested Foods

These foods appeal to pregnant women because of their taste and/or texture.

Carbohydrates / "Dry" foods

- Crackers, melba toast, bread sticks, rice cakes, toast, graham wafers
- Bagel, english muffin, tea biscuit, rolls, cinnamon buns
- Raisin bread, cereal bars, Rice Krispie® squares, dry cereal (Crispix®, Shreddies®), hot instant cereal, cooked cereal
- Vanilla wafers, plain biscuits, ginger cookies, Social Teas®
- White rice
- Plain baked potato, mashed potato
- Plain noodles, Chinese instant noodles (dry or cooked)

Fluids / "Wet" foods

- Flat ginger ale, ginger tea (hot water poured over grated ginger)
- Lemonade, lemon Jello, lemon slush (lemonade over crushed ice), lemon sorbet, water flavoured with lemon
- Fruit juices, fruit beverages, fruit crystals, Tang®, Kool Aid®, Gatorade® (dilute with water as needed)
- Bottled water, flavoured sparkling water, soda water
- Popsicles, juicesicles, fruit slushes
- Safe herbal teas (i.e. citrus peel, ginger, lemon balm, linden flower, orange peel, rose hip)
- Broth or consomme
- Melons, canned fruits, individual fruit cups, frozen fruit

Cravings...

- **salty** chips, pretzels, nachos, cheese, salted veggies
- **tart/sour** pickles, lemonade, salt and vinegar
- **tart/sweet** pickled ginger
- **earthy** brown rice, mushroom soup, quinoa, hummus, eggplant
- **crunchy** celery sticks, apples (green), rice crackers
- **bland** mashed potatoes, rice
- **soft** bread, noodles, potatoes
- **sweet** cake, sugary cereal, milkshake
- **fruity** juices, popsicles, smoothies
- **wet** juice, melon, soup, seltzer
- **dry** crackers, crusty bread

Sample menu

15 minutes before rising

dry cookies, muffin or dry cereals

Breakfast (as soon as possible after rising)

8:00 toast, muffin, bun or bagel with jam or soft fruit

9:00 juice, milk, yogourt, tea or water

Morning snack

10:00 plain biscuits or melba toast with peanut butter

11:00 juice, milk, tea or water, popsicle

Lunch

12:00 cheese and bread or sandwich
dry cookies

1:00 juice, milk, tea, water or soft drink

Afternoon snack

3:00 raisin bread or crackers

4:00 popsicle, juice, milk or soft drink

Supper

6:00 rice, noodles or potato with plain meat
and vegetables and/or soft fruit

7:00 juice, milk, tea, water or soft drink

Evening snack

8:00 crackers or bread with cheese or peanut butter

Avoid drinking.

Increase your diet **gradually** according to your tolerance.

Recipes

Baby Shake

125 ml apple juice
1 frozen banana or other fruit
125 ml yogurt
protein powder or nuts
125 ml milk or milk substitute
5 ml molasses
5 ml nutritional yeast
15 ml wheat germ
15 ml honey or maple syrup

Blend all ingredients until desired consistency. This recipe can be adapted to individual preferences for texture and flavour. If something listed above does not appeal to you, take it out.

Banana Orange Shake

500 ml orange juice
2 mashed bananas
250 ml ice cream

Put all ingredients in a blender, cover and blend until smooth.

Apple Jello[®] Fingers

1 can (340 ml) frozen apple juice concentrate
– or any flavoured juice
3 envelopes unflavored gelatin
375 ml water (about a 12 oz can)

Soften gelatin in apple juice. Boil water. Add juice/gelatin mix to the boiling water until gelatin dissolves. Remove from heat and pour into 22 cm x 33 cm lightly oiled pan. Refrigerate and cut in squares when firm.

Frozen Bananas

Firm bananas
Popsicle sticks
Honey or peanut butter
125 ml cereal crumbs or toasted wheat germ or chopped nuts
Cut bananas in half and insert a popsicle stick in each. Wrap bananas in plastic and place in freezer. When ready to eat, dip in honey or peanut butter and roll in cereal crumbs, wheat germ or nuts.

Resources

Further advice:

- Call the dietitian at 737-8906
- Discuss with your nurse/health care provider
- Call Motherisk at 1-800-436-8477

More information and support groups:

- www.hyperemesis.org

References

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