

HYPEREMESIS GRAVIDARUM

Hyperemesis gravidarum is persistent nausea and vomiting during the early phase in pregnancy. It is a serious condition if untreated because it can cause dehydration and drastic body chemistry changes (mostly in the blood). It is not the same thing as regular morning sickness. Morning sickness is thought to be caused by the increase in *Human Chorionic Gonadotropin* (a hormone secreted during pregnancy). The cause of hyperemesis gravidarum is unknown. However, some pregnant woman are at higher risk: multiple gestation (more than one baby such as twins, triplets, etc.), previous history of hyperemesis gravidarum or, hydatidiform mole (not a true pregnancy but abnormal tissue growth).

Symptoms *may* include:

- Severe, persistent nausea with or without vomiting
- Weight loss or failure to gain weight during the pregnancy
- Lightheadedness, fainting, tiredness, headache
- Possible *dehydration* (loss of water from the body)

What your doctor can do:

- Diagnose the problem by asking about your symptoms, doing a physical exam, and ordering laboratory blood tests and urine tests.
- Possibly order eye exams to check for retinal bleeding.
- Prescribe any of several *anti-emetic medications* to stop nausea and vomiting.
- If severe dehydration has occurred, admit you to the hospital to replace fluids and restore electrolytes (essential body salts) with intravenous therapy (IV).

What you can do:

- Avoid greasy, fried, or spicy foods that may cause nausea.
- Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, especially if vomiting. Sports drinks (Gatorade, Power Burst, etc.) may be helpful in replacing lost electrolytes if vomiting.
- Eat healthy foods such as those high in protein (lean meats, poultry, or fish). These are thought to be less likely to stimulate nausea.
- Eat small amounts of food every 2-3 hours throughout the day rather than 2-3 large meals per day.
- Take only the medication your doctor prescribes. Avoid taking any over-the-counter medications unless you check with your doctor.

What you can expect:

- A full recovery by the 20th week. Most women feel better by the 2nd trimester (13th -14th week).

Contact your doctor if you are experiencing severe nausea and vomiting, if your condition worsens, or symptoms do not improve.