

Nausea during pregnancy

Although nausea during pregnancy is often dismissed as a ‘minor disorder’ it can be a very real affliction for many women. This nausea that may occur at any time, day or night, it can interfere with quality of life and may be accompanied with vomiting. In some cases this results in hospitalisation for rehydration therapy.

In traditional Chinese medicine this nausea and vomiting can arise from a variety of causes. Acupuncture treatment is aimed at strengthening the energetic function of the digestive system and correcting any underlying disharmonies. In addition specific dietary advice is directed at reducing the energetic workload of the digestive system. To get the most out of any treatment, it is essential to keep yourself hydrated and your blood sugar levels stable. While it can be difficult to think about preparing snacks and drinks throughout the day, this will help keep your nausea under better control.

Fluid intake

While it may not appear that drinking relieves the nausea, becoming even slightly dehydrated will make the nausea more intense. Dry lips, feeling thirsty and a reduced urinary output are signs that your fluid intake is inadequate.

If your urine output decreases to only once or twice in 24 hours you need to let your doctor or midwife know. This is because once dehydration affects your electrolyte balance past a certain point the best option may be intravenous re-hydration in a hospital.

If you are finding it difficult to drink fluids, concentrate on having small amounts frequently rather than trying to drink a cup of fluid all at once. Many women find it difficult to drink water in which case soups may be useful (potato soup can be useful as it is very bland).

Warm teas such as ginger or peppermint may also be helpful. If burping relieves the nausea a carbonated drink may help settle the nausea.

Feedback from women suggests the following may be helpful:

- Apple cider vinegar (1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar- fill cup with boiling water – add honey to taste)
- Chamomile or peppermint tea
- Ginger ale or ginger tea (grate a piece of root ginger the size of a 50 cent piece, seep in boiling water for 10 minutes – add honey to taste. Do not exceed 3 cups per day).
- Mineral water with freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Miso soup
- Potato soup. Peel and chop 2 medium sized peeled potatoes, fry in a little butter or oil, add 1 cup water and salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for 15 – 20 minutes adding extra fluids (water or stock) to achieve the consistency for the soup you prefer.
- Umeboshi plum tea (half a tsp of paste stirred into a cup of boiling water- honey to taste).

Keeping your blood sugar levels maintained

Having small regular snacks will help keep you blood sugar levels stable.

This means eating a small snack at least every 1 ½ to 2 hours, before that empty, hungry feeling sets in. The snack can be very small, a few raisins or nuts (almonds are often useful), ½ of a sandwich, ¼ of a piece of fruit. It’s a delicate balance as to exactly how much you feel comfortable eating as overeating will also intensify the nausea.

Avoid sugary foods that will quickly elevate your blood sugar levels; chocolate, cakes, pastries and orange juice, for example and instead consuming the slower releasing carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes.

Certain foods will often make you feel worse. Foods that worked for your friends or mother in law may have different effects for you. If you experience phlegm in your throat, or consent saliva build up, try avoiding dairy products, especially milk and cheese. If you are feeling cold and tired, focus on warm drinks and soups. If you want cold foods try freezing fruit such as grapes and sucking on these or plain ice blocks.

It may come as a surprise that many vegetables and healthy foods you would like to be eating become very unappealing. It is a common experience for women that foods such as salads, broccoli and brown bread increase their feelings of nausea, while foods such as sausages, meat pies, fried chips and white bread help settle the nausea. If this is the case for you it may be helpful to consider type of food that is suitable for an eight-month-old baby as these are easy to digest and gentle on your stomach. Feedback from women suggests the following may be helpful:

- Baked vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes and carrots
- Cooked or tinned fruit such as peaches and pears
- Dried fruit and nuts such as almonds, dried apricots and raisins
- Quality meat that is minced or gravy from meat served with mashed potatoes
- White bread with filling that includes egg, ham or spreads such as marmite or vegemite
- If you need to buy a snack in a hurry consider ½ small packet of plain chips or ¼ of a nut muesli bar

While it seems counter intuitive and many women feel guilty that you are not able to tolerate the healthy foods they would like to be consuming, the reality is that in early pregnancy your baby has its own nutritional sources. Your appetite for more healthy food will usually improve as you move towards the second trimester when your baby requires more nutrition from you.

Smells

Having a heightened sense of smell in early pregnancy may significantly contribute towards nausea. The following may be helpful;

- Placing pure vanilla or peppermint essence in an oil burner in your bedroom or in the kitchen.
- Placing slices of lemon and ginger in a slow cooker and leaving on low with the lid off to fill your kitchen with this scent
- Taking a lemon or lime, piercing holes in the fruit and then wrapping in a clean handkerchief or cloth to carry around with you and smell when you come across unpleasant smells
- For some women specific washing brand powders trigger nausea- you may need to change your brand
- Toothpaste can also be a smell that women find difficult – you can try children's toothpaste instead

Pressure points for nausea during pregnancy

Using pressure points may be helpful. Try all three to find the ones that are the most suitable for you. Place firm pressure on the point for several minutes. If useful, continue to apply pressure every two hours, or during the nausea, for approximately five minutes.

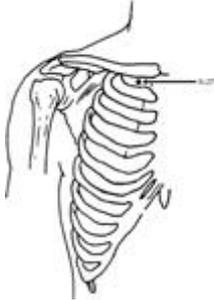
PC 6

This point is three of the woman's finger widths above the transverse crease of the inner wrist. It lies directly between the two tendons felt there. It is possible to buy wristbands to apply pressure to this point, available through chemists called "sea bands"



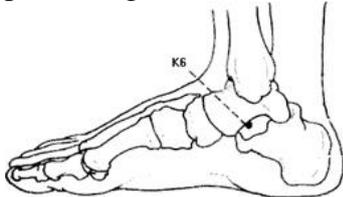
KID 27

This point is situated in the depression on the lower border of the clavicle (collar bone), two of the woman's thumb widths from the centre the sternum (breast bone).



KID 6

This point is situated one of the woman's thumb widths below the medial malleolus (the protruding bone on the inside of the ankle).



Illustrations

Original illustrations (PC 6). Tina Young

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