

Morning Sickness

By Alexis Chesney MS, ND, LAc

The majority of pregnant women will experience some morning sickness. It is common to experience nausea and vomiting between the fourth and eighth weeks of pregnancy, lasting to 16 weeks or more, as a result of the sudden change in hormones. Women who experience severe nausea with vomiting more than four times daily may be diagnosed with hyperemesis gravidarum. This can be very serious because it can lead to dehydration, weight loss and metabolic imbalances. It is important to call your physician if you are experiencing palpitations, sweats, chills, excessive salivation, fainting, vomiting more than four times a day, weight loss or vomiting of blood.

There are many effective natural treatments that can help women experiencing morning sickness. Here are a few suggestions:

Diet

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day.
- Eat bland foods, especially before bed and when you wake up in the morning. Keep saltine crackers by the bed.
- Avoid dairy, spice, high-fat, high-carbohydrate meals.
- Avoid caffeine.
- Avoid garlic, onions and cabbage.
- Keep a food diary including when episodes of nausea or vomiting occur in order to uncover potential triggers.
- Eat a high protein breakfast and high protein snacks throughout the day.
- The following foods are often comforting in small doses: smoothies, potatoes, watermelon, rice cakes, grapes, avocado, pickles, applesauce, sorbet, celery or carrot sticks, oatmeal, breads and whole grains.

Herbs

- Drink ginger tea throughout the day, or take ginger capsules.
- Mint, chamomile and raspberry tea may also be soothing.

Lifestyle

- You may require more sleep during pregnancy, which may be helpful in the form of a longer night's rest, or naps during the day.
- Stress management is very important, as stress may be a trigger. Consider various ways that you enjoy inviting calm into your life: gentle exercise, being outdoors, sewing, yoga, meditation, music.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is an effective modality used to treat morning sickness. It has existed as a field of medicine for over 4000 years. The stimulation of a point called "Pericardium 6" on the wrist can prevent, as well as relieve nausea and vomiting. The point is found two finger widths under your wrist in between the two central tendons. You may stimulate this point on your own with your fingernail, or purchase wrist bands created for this purpose at a local pharmacy.

If you see an acupuncturist for morning sickness, you will receive an acupuncture needle at this point. You will also receive needles at other points to provide a more comprehensive treatment, which is often more successful than solely stimulating "Pericardium 6".



In my own practice, I have worked with women struggling with debilitating morning sickness.

Sarah S. shares her story below:

“For the first 4 months of my pregnancies I was completely debilitated by 'morning sickness'. The strong nausea and vomiting throughout ALL waking hours, heartburn, indigestion, shakes, chills, fatigue and inability to eat or drink even water forced me to stop working with my first pregnancy. With my second, I now had a toddler to feed and look after when I couldn't even manage that for myself. Fortunately most women don't experience morning sickness of this severity, however, that means that most people, including medical practitioners, don't understand it or even believe that women can be as sick as they are describing. We are told to take ginger, consume small frequent meals and are prescribed various 'safe' pharmaceuticals, none of which actually help when the morning sickness is this severe.

What does help is acupuncture. I am forever grateful for my treatments at Sojourns, which have allowed me to eat, drink, sleep and perform activities of daily living- what a novel idea. It is my greatest hope that more women will be exposed to the benefits of acupuncture as a first line of treatment for morning sickness so that they will be able to savor and enjoy all 9 miraculous months of pregnancy.”

Pregnancy is a special time of life. While some women suffer from morning sickness, some do not. And rarely, women may experience severe morning sickness. Trying the suggestions listed above while under the care of a physician may provide a great benefit so that pregnancy can be easily treasured.