

***Morning sickness is one of the best known downsides to pregnancy but how common is morning sickness and what causes it? More importantly is there anything you can do to minimise its miserable affects. We asked two of our consulting Obstetricians for their thoughts on treatments for morning sickness while some of North West Private mums share some of their tips to help get you through this sickly stage of your pregnancy.***

Morning sickness refers to the nauseous feeling you may have during the first trimester of pregnancy as hormone levels change, blood pressure fluctuates and blood sugar drops. Between half and two thirds of all women who fall pregnant will experience some level of morning sickness, especially in the first trimester. The severity can range from occasional bouts of queasiness to persistent vomiting and while these episodes are more common in the early part of the day, morning sickness can affect you at any time of the day or night.

Morning sickness is not an indicator of the health of your pregnancy and usually has no long term negative effects for the baby or mother. Severe morning sickness that continues throughout the pregnancy is called hyperemesis gravidarum (HG) and can result in weight loss and dehydration for the mum to be, requiring treatment in hospital.

Most women will feel the unpleasant effects of morning sickness by about week four of their pregnancy with nausea and vomiting hanging around until about week thirteen. The fact that your troubled tummy occurs at this very early stage of your pregnancy, when you may be trying to stay mum on your news, it makes it difficult to manage with friends, family and work colleagues.

Unfortunately there is no easy fix for morning sickness but North West Private consulting obstetrician Dr Jamie Friebe says if it's causing problems women should discuss their situation with their doctor.

“A mother should seek help for morning sickness symptoms whenever she wishes, be it for reassurance all is OK, or just to discuss options for management, of which there are many,” said Dr Friebe.

Dr Friebe said his biggest concern relating to morning sickness was the risk of dehydration.

“I tell my patients if they are continually vomiting and unable to keep their fluids down over a number of hours then they need admission for IV fluids. Food is not such a concern in the beginning, but dehydration is serious and can lead to miscarriage.”

Dr John Howland agrees that morning sickness isn't something that has to be suffered through with a range of treatments available to ease symptoms.



“Medications are available which are effective and safe in pregnancy meaning women do not have to put up with morning sickness if it is becoming difficult to manage,” Dr Howland said.

“Some options are available over the counter such as a combination of vitamin B6 and a drug called doxylamine – a common brand is Restavit. This is often very effective in reducing nausea but can cause drowsiness.

“If this combination is not enough or if it makes you too drowsy your doctor can prescribe a variety of drugs which are safe to take. These include chlorpromazine, ondansetron wafers and occasionally prednisone.”

While morning sickness seems to be par for the course with many pregnancies, women are resourceful and over time we’ve worked out a few ways to relieve our sickly symptoms. Here are some of the top tips our North West Private mums say have worked for them:

**Eat small amounts, more often** – Low blood sugar is said to be one of the causes of morning sickness so it can pay to eat small amounts of bland foods more frequently to keep your levels more stable. Some women have success by eating dry crackers or toast before sitting up in bed of a morning, to avoid nausea brought about by an empty stomach. Many women find that high carbohydrate foods such as bread and pasta sit better than spicy or acidic foods.

**Stay hydrated** – Drink water as often as you can, particularly if you have actually been vomiting. Clear soups, weak tea or diluted juice can also be well tolerated in small amounts. If nothing is staying down try sucking on cubes of ice or nibbling on an electrolyte ice-block such as Hydrolyte.

**Smells can set you off** - Many a pregnant woman has been sent running for the bathroom due to suspect smell. If smells are a trigger for you you’ll soon find out what they are so do your best to avoid them. Food preparation is another trigger for many women so delegate your turn in the kitchen when you can. Equally there are some smells that might quell your queasiness. Essential oils such as peppermint can be very effective to treat nausea so if they work for you keep them handy.

**Put your feet up** – Some women only feel the effects of morning sickness when they are tired, particular after a day at work. If this is your downfall try lying down as soon as you get home and perhaps apply a cold washer to your forehead, neck and wrists.

**Get help when it doesn’t feel right** – If your morning sickness becomes unmanageable or you are feeling other symptoms of dehydration such as dizziness or constant headaches see your doctor and discuss your options.