

Nausea in pregnancy

Nausea in pregnancy is called “morning sickness”, although many women experience it throughout the day and even at night.

Acupuncture can bring a great deal of relief for mild to moderate nausea and vomiting. For severe vomiting (hyperemesis gravidarum), please also work closely with your medical practitioner for ongoing medication and fluid management.

Here are some things that you can do between your acupuncture visits to enhance the results of your treatments.

1. Rest and sleep

For modern women, this is probably the hardest one to achieve – and therefore it becomes the most important!

In Chinese medicine, it’s recognised that your ability to be alive and have a physical body relies on bringing in energy from outside, into your body – food, air, water. You assimilate these nutrients and then they become *yours*. We say in Chinese medicine that energy connects at your Centre, then it can be circulated in *your* body.

There is a special acupuncture meridian – that is never used in treatments – called the *Bao Mai*, or “Womb Meridian”. It unites the Heart and Womb. This is the ancient Chinese recognition that when energy connects at your Centre, then simultaneously it connects with your baby’s Centre, giving your baby the energy to grow and develop.

Your baby is developing from an invisible dot into human form by the end of the first trimester. This is a huge transition. This enormous development demands a lot of that energy that you’re drawing in to your Centre.

Nature will give the baby what they need – sometimes leaving you feeling tired and unwell!

So the very best thing you can do in first trimester is get lots and lots of sleep and rest. This is excellent medicine.

It’s hard because you can’t tell your workplace, nor will most people tell friends or even family. So it requires a bit of planning and discipline to keep sensible work hours, turn down extra social events and lay low for a while.

But if you manage to do this – regularly – then your body will thank you.

2. Hydration

Regular sips of water throughout the day (and night) will help keep your hydration levels stable and reduce the severity of nausea.

If you are not tolerating water, you can try:

- herbal tea (chamomile, peppermint, licorice root, ginger – max 3 cups ginger per day)
- adding a little juice to water (or lemon, or 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar)
- sports drinks
- carbonated drinks (soda water, ginger ale)
- sucking ice blocks
- soups eg chicken or vegetable broth, potato soup

3. Snacks

Regular snacking keeps your blood sugar stable, offering protection against worsening nausea.

Nuts, fruit, sandwiches, cheese, salted crackers, muesli bars, toast... You will find foods that work for you. Make sure you have them available always – in your hand bag, at work, at home, in the car.

Many women find they prefer mainly carbohydrates in first trimester – pasta, bread, rice, potatoes, oats. You can trust your body to communicate what it needs at this time. Most women find they naturally return to their normal diet by second trimester.

You can experiment with having a protein snack before bed (nuts, yoghurt, chicken, tofu) and then carbohydrates for breakfast.

Example foods that some women find helpful (but always listen to your own body):

- almonds
- baby rice porridge
- salty crackers
- dried fruit
- sandwiches (egg, cheese, Vegemite)
- grapefruit
- vegemite
- miso
- noodles
- pasta
- peaches
- pears
- potatoes (soup, baked, chips...)
- white bread
- yoghurt
- peppermints (eg Tic Tacs)

A note about your “healthy diet”... Many women are horrified to find that their regular intake of clean, healthy food has been replaced by hot chips and cup-a-soups!

If this is you – don’t worry. Once you get into second trimester, things will get back to normal. Your baby will be fine. If the thought of vegetables turns your stomach, stick with whatever you can handle in the moment. If you have times during the day when you’re feeling a little better, then is the time to try for something a little healthier.

But most of all, don’t worry!

4. Smells

Some women become very sensitive to smells in first trimester. Often strong smells that were neutral and pleasant can become unbearable – common culprits are coffee or meat.

You can use essential oils such as lemon, peppermint or vanilla essence. Some women carry a cut lemon with them and use the fresh scent to calm their nausea when out.

5. Medication and supplements

For severe nausea or vomiting, you may get the best results by combining acupuncture with anti-emetic medication. You would typically receive acupuncture treatments twice or three times a week, using medication (as discussed with your doctor) at the first sign of nausea during the periods between acupuncture treatments.

A study found that either 1.05g ginger or 75mg vitamin B6 daily for three weeks significantly reduced nausea, retching and vomiting.

See your naturopath for further advice on supplements or visit Dee Why Discount Vitamins (on Pittwater Rd) for in-store naturopathic advice.

6. Sea Band

You can get travel-sickness bands (brand name “Sea Band”) from the pharmacy. The bands apply pressure to the acupoint on the inner wrist called *Neiguan* (“inner gate” – Pericardium 6). This point has been studied in clinical trials and found to reduce nausea associated with various medical conditions. It is sometimes used in acupuncture treatments for morning sickness (depending on the individual).