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Nausea without vomiting

Key points: Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms that most everyone will feel for a short time at some point in their lives, for example because of medications, food poisoning, or a stomach virus. In collaboration with the National Institutes of Health, the MyGiHealth research team conducted a national survey and found that 45% of Americans reported having at least some nausea within the last 7 days. Another 18% reported vomiting, and 49% said they experienced regurgitation in the previous week. Only rarely do people feel nausea or vomit all the time or for a long time. The MyGiHealth survey found that only 1% of Americans report nausea on a constant basis. Most everyone has experienced nausea and vomiting sometime in their life. Some people have more nausea and vomiting than others. When doctors discuss nausea and vomiting, these are the definitions they use: Nausea is a queasy feeling in the belly or throat (feeling “sick to your stomach”). It is a feeling that often comes before vomiting, but people may or may not vomit when they feel nauseous. Vomiting (throwing up) is the forceful emptying of stomach contents through the mouth. This occurs from a process called “reverse peristalsis”, which means movement of material in the opposite direction than usual. A related but separate term that some people use is “dry heaves”, which means trying to throw up but nothing comes out. Regurgitation is often confused with vomiting. Regurgitation is when food or liquid comes back up into your throat or mouth, but usually without the force and feelings of nausea or the need to vomit. For more information on delayed stomach emptying, ulcer and bowel obstruction, please explore the nausea/vomiting educational videos. If you plan to see a doctor for nausea or vomiting, then it will be important to describe the symptoms you are experiencing. The “My History” function of MyGiHealth asks more about nausea and vomiting and can help you translate your symptoms into “doctor talk” should you plan to see a healthcare provider. Nausea/Vomiting causesKey points: Most often, nausea and vomiting are caused by a viral or bacterial illness, such as food poisoning or a stomach virus (mistakenly called “stomach flu”). Many medications and supplements can also cause nausea and vomiting. If it's really bothering you or lasting a long time, talk to your doctor. Nausea and vomiting that last a long time can signal a serious problem, but this is very rare. It's best to talk to a doctor if nausea and vomiting happen all the time or over and over again. Some physical reasons for nausea and vomiting: Other causes of nausea and vomiting: Alcohol or other toxins in the body Chemical or mineral imbalance Dehydration or heat stroke Dizziness or motion Emotions and stress Head or brain injuries or brain tumor Migraines Pregnancy Smells and tastes. With dietAvoid eating... If you're vomiting, it goes without saying that it's best to wait for the vomiting to stop before trying to eat or drink anything. If you're nauseous, it's best to avoid eating these types of foods: Anything fatty, greasy, or fried Foods that are very sweet, such as candy or cookies Spicy foods Foods with strong odors Foods that are hard to digest or have a large amount of fiber (such as raw vegetables, read meat) Foods with a large amount of fiber can slow your stomach down and possibly worsen vomiting Foods to try eating... For nausea, sometimes these foods can help because they are easy to digest and swallow: Ice chips Clear liquids (water, apple juice, tea) Soft foods (foods you can cut with just a fork, like boiled potatoes or noodles) Toast, crackers, pretzels Boiled or baked chicken without skin Yogurt Candied ginger (studies show that ginger can reduce nausea for some people) With Lifestyle ChangesSometimes these changes can help with nausea or vomiting: Eat several small meals (no larger than the palm of your hand) throughout the day, instead of 3 larger meals, Avoid eating in places that are stuffy, very warm, or have cooking odors. Sip liquids throughout the day. Eat foods at room temperature or lower, rather than hot foods. For people with motion sickness and migraines, lying down after eating (with the head at least 12 inches above the feet) can help. For most people, though, lying down after a meal can make symptoms worse. With Over-the-counter medicineAntihistamines Common names: Antihistamines are most often used for allergies, however some have also been found to reduce nausea caused by motion sickness. Phosphorylated carbohydrate solution Phosphorylated carbohydrate solution works by calming the stomach muscle contractions that can cause vomiting Common names: Emetrol™ Nauzene™ Nausea Control™ Proton Pump Inhibitors When nausea and vomiting are related to heartburn, proton pump inhibitors can help. Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) stop the release of acid in the stomach. Most PPIs are available over the counter, but a few still require a prescription. Common names: Prevacid™ Prilosec™ Zegerid™ Protonix™ Aciphex™ Nexium™ Ginger Sometimes ginger can help calm nausea: Ginger tea: Buy ginger tea bags or make it from ginger root. To make it, peel ginger root and cut a few slices. Simmer it in hot water for about 30 minutes. Fresh ginger: Peel and chew on a small piece of fresh ginger. Supplements: People can take a 250 mg ginger supplement 3 times a day with a meal. PhosphorylatedCaution: Do not take phosphorylated carbohyhydrate if you are diabetic or have hereditary fructose intolerance. Proton Lansoprazole - Prevacid™ Omeprazole - Prilosec™ Zegerid™ Pantoprazole - Protonix™ Rabeprazole - Aciphex™ Caution: PPIs should not be taken by people with serious liver disease or low levels of magnesium. Sign up for MyGiHealth to track your symptoms and prepare for your gastroenterologist appointment. Nausea with or without vomiting is common in children. Most of the time, the cause is not serious. The symptoms usually go away in a day or two and can be managed at home. However, there are times when you should alert your child's doctor immediately.Nausea or vomiting associated with one or more of the following symptoms should prompt an immediate call to the doctor's office:severe abdominal pains bad headaches stiff neckfever of 102F (39C) or greaterfrequent diarrheaappears dehydratednot making urineVomiting that seems to be getting worse or that lasts more than one to two days also should be discussed with your doctor.If your child is older than one year, this health decision guide will help you understand more about what usually causes children to vomit, and help you know when you should contact your pediatrician for medical care. Please note, this guide is not meant to take the place of a visit to your pediatrician's office.Click here to begin.Your child is vomiting and you are concerned.When your child vomits, is it a greenish-yellow color, does it contain any blood, or does it look like coffee grounds?Yes, this describes my child's vomit.No, that does not describe my child's vomit.As a service to our readers, Harvard Health Publishing provides access to our library of archived content. Please note the date of last review or update on all articles. No content on this site, regardless of date, should ever be used as a substitute for direct medical advice from your doctor or other qualified clinician. Nausea is one of the symptoms of COVID-19. Even if your symptoms are mild, get tested for COVID-19 immediately — use the COVID-19 Symptom Checker if you're not sure what to do. Nausea is the feeling you get when you think you are going to vomit. It's not usually a sign of anything serious, and there are steps you can take to help you feel better. Nausea isn't an illness, but a symptom, or something you feel. It often comes before you vomit (when you throw up the contents of your stomach through your mouth). You might also experience dry retching (heaving as if you were going to vomit, but with nothing leaving your stomach). What causes nausea? If you suddenly feel nauseous after you've eaten, it could be caused by gastritis (an inflammation of the lining of the stomach), an ulcer or many other problems. If the nausea comes on 1 to 8 hours after you've eaten, it could be due to food poisoning. Sometimes food poisoning can take even longer to make you feel nauseous. Most pregnant women will experience nausea during the first trimester (first 12 weeks) of their pregnancy, and sometimes after this in the pregnancy. It is common to feel nauseous if you are in intense pain, have a head injury, or you are experiencing a lot of emotional stress. Other causes of nausea are: Children usually get nausea due to a virus, food poisoning, an allergy or food intolerance, motion sickness, eating or coughing too much, or when they have a fever. When should I see my doctor? See your doctor if your nausea doesn't go away, or if you need help managing nausea when you are pregnant. Nausea can sometimes be a symptom of something more serious, such as heart problems or an ulcer. Seek urgent medical attention if you also have symptoms such as chest pain, confusion, a high fever, a stiff neck, blurred vision, severe pain in your stomach or a severe headache. Often nausea is accompanied by vomiting. See a doctor if you vomit consistently for more than 2 days (24 hours for children under 2 or 12 hours for infants), or if you vomit a lot for more than 1 month. If you are vomiting, it's important to avoid dehydration so try to keep taking sips of water. How is nausea treated? The best thing to do if you feel nauseous is take small sips of water or herbal tea. Sipping cold or frozen drinks may help to relieve the symptoms. Sometimes nibbling on some ginger or dry cracker biscuits can help you feel better. Try not to skip meals, as an empty stomach can make the nausea worse. Eat small amounts more often. Some foods you may be able to manage include foods at room temperature, like sandwiches, puddings, noodles or biscuits, and salty foods like clear soup or potato crisps. Avoid fatty, spicy or very sweet foods as these can make the nausea worse. Your doctor may prescribe medicine such as an antihistamine or an antiemetic (medicine to stop you vomiting). If you are pregnant, they will choose a medicine that is safe for your baby. Can nausea be prevented? If you feel nauseous often, it's best to avoid things that bring on the nausea, such as strong smells or fatty or spicy foods. Try to eat at times when you don't feel nauseous and avoid having an empty stomach. Eat small meals and then rest with your head elevated while you're digesting your food. It's important to keep drinking fluids since becoming dehydrated will make you feel even more nauseous. Take small sips frequently and try to eat and drink at separate times. Rest as much as you can, and avoid standing up or getting out of bed too quickly. You can buy medicine from a chemist to prevent motion sickness. It's also a good idea to travel facing forward and avoid reading or watching a screen when you're in a car. If you are on a ship at sea, it may help to look at the horizon.Last reviewed: March 2021 Medically reviewed by Saurabh Sethi, M.D., MPH — Written by Erica Cirino — Updated on July 16, 2018What does it feel like?During pregnancyTakeaway OverviewNausea is one of the most common medical symptoms and it can be related to many different conditions. Usually, nausea is not a sign of a serious problem and passes on its own. But in other cases, nausea may be a sign of a health condition that needs attention, such as stomach flu, pregnancy, or a side effect from medication.Morning sickness is a common symptom of pregnancy. It's described as nausea experienced during pregnancy, usually in the mornings after waking up. It's most common during a woman's first trimester. Sometimes, it begins as early as two weeks after conception.Morning sickness is an uncomfortable condition that can occur with or without vomiting. But the main difference between nausea caused by morning sickness and nausea caused by other conditions is morning sickness is accompanied by other symptoms of early pregnancy. These symptoms include:A delayed or missed period. Some people may experience bleeding after they become pregnant but this bleeding is very light and is much shorter than a typical period. A missed period can also be caused by excessive weight loss or gain, fatigue, stress, change in birth control use, illness, high activity level, and breastfeeding.A change in breasts. Usually pregnancy causes swollen or sensitive breasts that feel tender to the touch. It can also cause darkening of the areas around the nipples (areolas). These changes in breasts can be caused by hormonal imbalances, changes in birth control, and PMS.Tiredness or fatigue. This symptom can also be caused by stress, overworking, mental health problems such as depression, the cold, the flu, a virus, allergies, insomnia, and poor nutrition.Lower backaches. These can also be caused by PMS, poor form when exercising, injury, poor sleeping habits, poor footwear, being overweight, and stress.Headaches. Headaches are commonly caused by dehydration and caffeine. They can also be caused by PMS, withdrawals from drugs or alcohol, eye strain, and stress.Mood swings caused by hormonal changes. You might feel happy one moment and depressed another. Mood swings can also be caused by poor nutrition, hormonal imbalances, or underlying mental health issues.Frequent urination. This can also be caused by urinary tract infections and diabetes, as well as an increase in liquid intake, or consumption of diuretics such as coffee.Food cravings or food aversions. You might feel like eating foods you normally don't like eating or avoiding foods you normally like to eat. These symptoms can also be caused by a poor diet, lack of proper nutrition, anxiety and stress, depression, PMS, or illness.You should consider taking a pregnancy test if you experience nausea with a few of these symptoms, especially if you've missed a period.The only way to know for certain whether or not you're pregnant is to take a pregnancy test. You can get early detection tests at most drug stores. If you want a certain result, your doctor can do a blood test to check for pregnancy.Both morning sickness and nausea can greatly impact your quality of life.If you're not pregnant and you've been nauseous for more than a month, especially with weight loss, schedule an appointment with your doctor. In the meantime, try to relax and stay hydrated. Keep away from strong odors such as perfume and food and other triggers like heat that could make your nausea worse. Stick to eating bland foods such as crackers and rice, and take over-the-counter motion sickness medication.Eating small meals and snacks, staying hydrated, avoiding nausea triggers, and taking vitamin B-6 supplements and antihistamines can ease most cases of morning sickness. If you're pregnant and experiencing morning sickness that's getting in the way of your daily activities, schedule a visit to your doctor. They can prescribe anti-nausea medication that will make you feel better and able to eat so you can nourish your pregnant body.Again, in most cases, nausea and morning sickness are not a cause for concern. But it's important to see a doctor if you're concerned or if your symptoms are getting in the way of your daily activities, so you can be happy and healthy. Last medically reviewed on July 16, 2018

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