

Nausea and Vomiting

Nausea during pregnancy is often dismissed as a minor disorder of pregnancy. As it can be compared to the experience of having persistent food poisoning it is not something that one would volunteer to endure for 12 to 16 weeks. As nausea is estimated to affect one third of all pregnancies it is worth considering the alternatives.

In traditional Chinese medicine, although the nausea associated with pregnancy can arise from a variety of conditions, these all involve the stomach's energy. If pregnancy interferes it affects not only the process of digestion but also the stomach's energetic nature of aiding the movement of food downward through the digestive tract. Strong upward rebellious energy or a weakness in this down bearing function results in the nausea and vomiting.

While acupuncture treatment is aimed at strengthening the energetic function of the stomach and correcting any underlying disharmonies, dietary advice is directed at reducing the energetic workload of the digestive system.

To get the most out of treatment, it is essential to be kind to your body. During the nausea thinking of food may not exactly be a priority but it will help to follow the following guidelines;

Fluid intake;

It is essential that you do not become dehydrated. 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 a day you need to let your doctor or midwife know.

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. Try soups (potato soup can be useful as it is very bland) or warm teas. Ginger tea or peppermint tea are often helpful. If burping makes you feel better a carbonated drink may help settle the nausea.

Have small regular snacks, this 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.

You may find it helpful to have a snack that is high in protein (nuts, yoghurt) before going to bed and a carbohydrate- based snack (toast, crackers) on waking.

Nausea and Vomiting

Listen to your body.

Certain foods will defiantly make you feel worse. Foods that worked for you 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.

Rest will definitely be beneficial, although temping the “superwomen ideal” is not always based in reality, respect the changes that your body is going through. If possible arrange some down time for that time of day when you are most prone to feeling nauseous, perhaps starting work an hour later or arranging some extra childcare for a few weeks.

If it works for you...

This is not an “absolutely recommended” list - rather feedback from women who found the following helpful.

Liquids;

apple cider vinegar (1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar- fill cup with boiling water – add honey to taste), chamomile tea, ginger ale, 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 lemon juice, peppermint tea, potato soup, umeboshi plum tea (half a tsp of paste stirred into a cup of boiling water- honey to taste).

Foods;

almonds, baby rice, crackers, dried fruit (especially apricots and raisins), egg sandwiches, grapefruit, Marmite, noodles, pasta, peaches, pears, peppermints, potatoes or kumara (in any form - baked, mashed, as chips), supermarket baby food, Vegemite, white bread, yoghurt (acidophilus).

It might be helpful to consider the type of food that is suitable for an eight-month-old baby; baked vegetables, cooked and raw fruits, well-cooked grains, broths and gravies, as these are easy to digest and gentle on your stomach.

Smells;

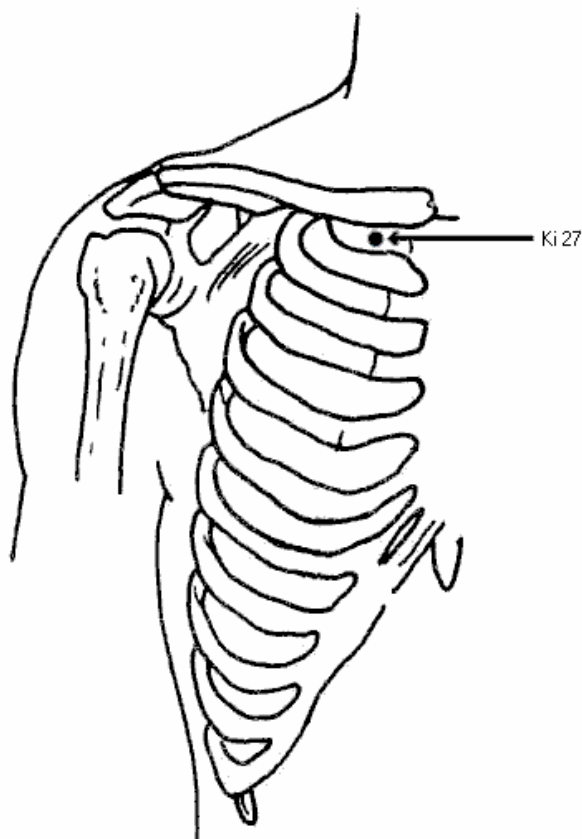
take advantage of a heightened sense of smell by having an oil burner in your bedroom or in the kitchen. Try using peppermint or vanilla essence.

Nausea and Vomiting

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.

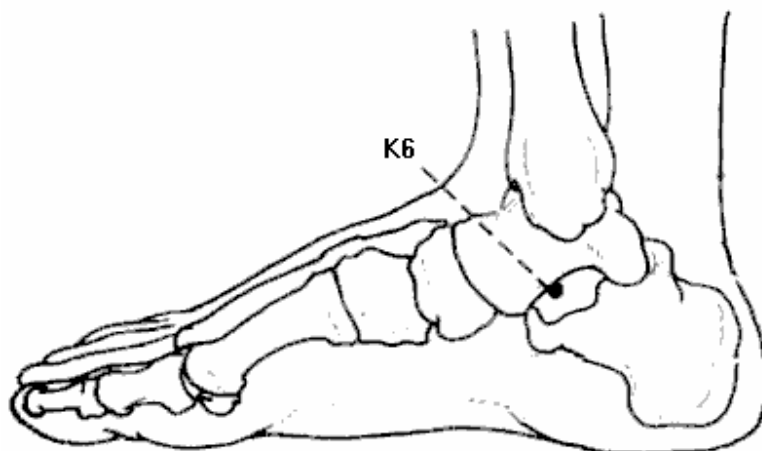
PC 6 This point is three of the woman's finger widths above the transverse crease of the inner wrist. It lies directly between the two tendons felt there. It is possible to buy wristbands to apply pressure to this point, available through chemists called "sea bands"



K 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).

Nausea and Vomiting

K 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:

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