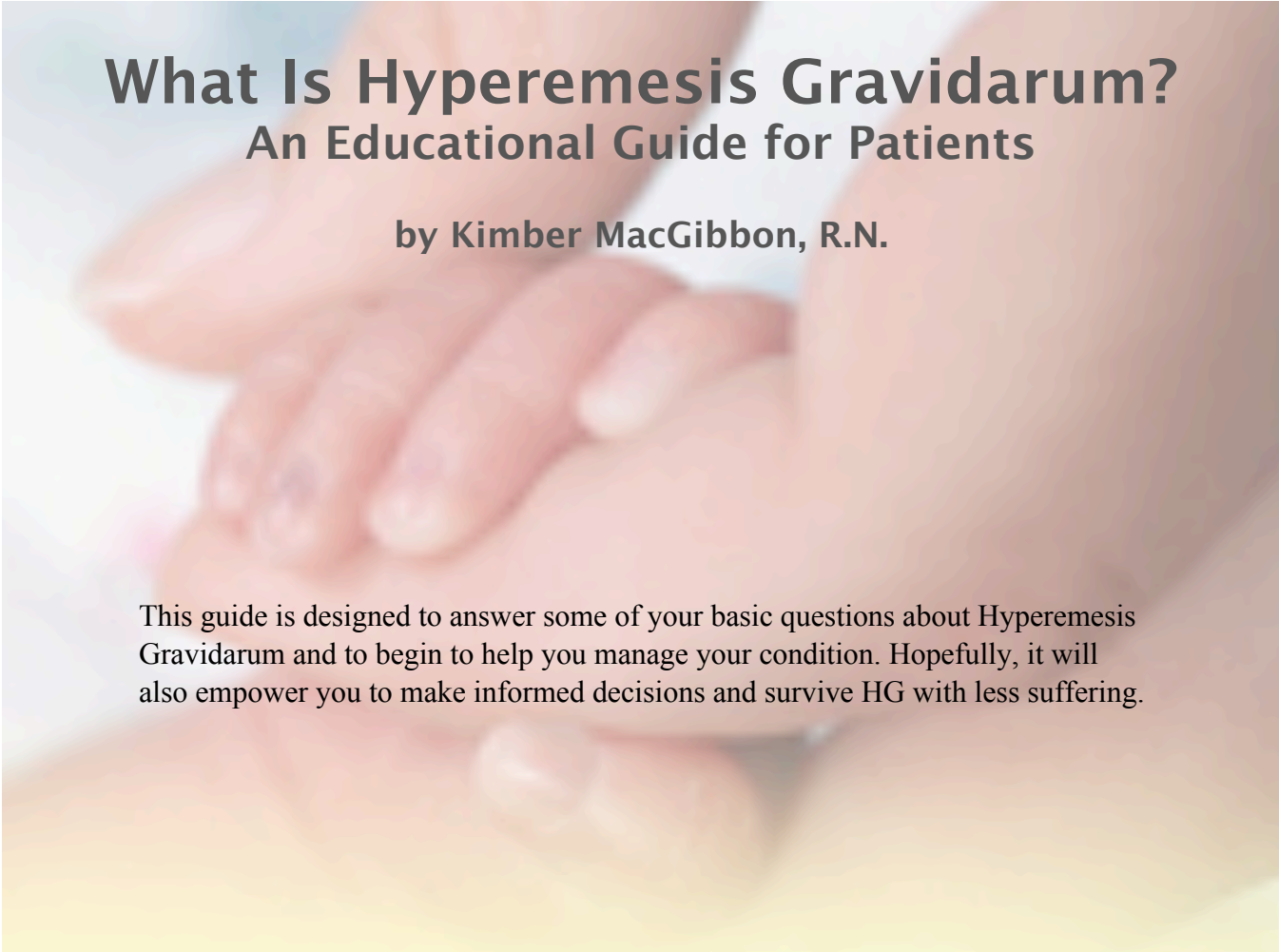




# What Is Hyperemesis Gravidarum?

## An Educational Guide for Patients

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This guide is designed to answer some of your basic questions about Hyperemesis Gravidarum and to begin to help you manage your condition. Hopefully, it will also empower you to make informed decisions and survive HG with less suffering.

## What is Hyperemesis Gravidarum?

As many as 90% of all pregnant women will experience some nausea and vomiting during the first three months of pregnancy. This is often called morning sickness (or pregnancy sickness), but will usually occur more often than just the morning.

Some women (1-10% of pregnant women) can develop the condition called hyperemesis gravidarum (HG). **This is when the nausea and/or vomiting becomes so severe that the woman loses a large amount of weight.** This can result in not enough water in the body (dehydration) and the body may not get enough nutrients to function properly. If HG becomes severe and/or is left untreated, it can be dangerous for both the mother and the baby.

Provided by HER Foundation  
[info@helpHER.org](mailto:info@helpHER.org)

For the more answers and info about Hyperemesis Gravidarum, please visit our website at  
[www.helpHER.org](http://www.helpHER.org)

## What Causes Hyperemesis Gravidarum?

The cause of HG is not completely understood, but there are several factors being researched that seem to contribute to it. These vary for each woman and may for each pregnancy:

- Rapidly changing hormone levels during early pregnancy
- The physical and emotional stress of pregnancy on the body
- Food in the stomach empties more slowly
- Stomach contents may move backwards into the esophagus (the tube that goes from the mouth to the stomach)
- Lack of certain vitamins and nutrients
- Infections (increased levels of bacteria) in the stomach
- Increased levels of other hormones like thyroid
- Changes in the immune function of the body
- Increased sense of smell and sensitivity to food texture/taste

## How Can I Tell if I Have Morning Sickness or HG?

Call your doctor if you have the following symptoms of HG:

- Weight loss of 5 to 10 pounds or more during the first trimester
- You lose weight rapidly, more than a pound a week for several weeks
- You cannot keep any food or fluids down for over 24 hours
- Your urine becomes very dark yellow, or you do not urinate for 8+ hours
- You have abdominal pain, fever, severe weakness, or feel faint
- You vomit once an hour or more, and after every meal/snack
- Your nausea is so severe, you cannot eat without vomiting or retching
- You vomit blood or feel your throat is extremely sore

## How Can Hyperemesis Gravidarum Be Treated?

There are several treatments for HG that are usually done in the following order:

### **1. Dietary Changes.**

- Eat small frequent meals to avoid having an empty stomach. Eat dry crackers, toast, or cereal before getting out of bed or when feeling queasy or nauseous.
- Drink lots of water between meals, but not much during meals. Wait at least 30 minutes after eating before drinking fluids.
- Eat foods that are easy to digest such as toast, crackers, bagels, pretzels, cereal, rice, pasta, and potatoes.
- Eat lean proteins like chicken, turkey, or low-fat dairy products (including protein powders with whey or soy). (Protein may decrease nausea.)
- Avoid greasy or spicy foods if they make you nauseous.
- Avoid strong food smells.

### **2. Keep a Diary.**

- Keep a diary of when vomiting occurs and anything that triggers it, such as certain foods, odors,

activities, or places. This information can help both you and your doctor.

- It may also be helpful to keep a record of your symptoms.

### 3. Medical Treatment.

- If severe dehydration occurs, intravenous fluids (by vein) may need to be given in the hospital, clinic or at home.
- Many doctors prefer not to give any medicines during pregnancy, if possible. However, when a woman has HG, the risk of using certain medicines is much less than the risk of malnutrition and significant weight loss from HG. Many of the following medicines have been used for years and are known not to harm the baby.
- Your doctor may prescribe some of these medicines:

#### Over-the-Counter Medicines: (purchased without a prescription)

Medicines for nausea and motion sickness.

Antihistamines:

- Meclizine (Bonine, Antivert)
- Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine)
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
- Doxylamine (Unisom tablets)

Vitamins:

- Pyridoxine (Vitamin B6)

#### Prescription Medicines:

Phenothiazines (to treat nausea and vomiting):

- Prochlorperazine (Compazine)
- Promethazine (Phenergan)
- Chlorpromazine (Thorazine)

Medicines to increase the movement of food from the stomach to the intestines:

- Metoclopramide (Reglan)

Medicines to decrease stomach acid production and treat reflux, or movement of stomach contents backwards into the esophagus:

- Ranitidine (Zantac)
- Famotidine (Pepcid)
- Lansoprazole (Prevacid)

Medications to decrease stimulation to the vomiting center in the brain:

- Ondansetron (Zofran)
- Granisetron (Kytril)
- Dolasetron (Anzemet)

Other Medications:

- Corticosteroids (Methylprednisolone)
- Inapsine (Droperidol)

## Nonpharmacologic Interventions for HG \*

- Eat small amounts of food every 2-3 hours.
- Eat low-fat complex carbohydrates:
  - rice
  - pasta
  - potatoes
  - bread
  - cereal
  - oatmeal

- Eat low-fat protein foods:
  - lean meat
  - dry roasted nuts (almonds)
  - tofu
  - broiled or canned fish
  - boiled beans
  - eggs
  - poultry without the skin
- Eat fruit and drink fruit juices (fresh is preferred).
- Drink soups and other liquids between meals rather than with meals.
- Avoid greasy or fried foods, as they are difficult to digest. Sometimes a special fat free diet that eliminates dairy, acidic foods like tomatoes and citrus fruit, and stomach irritants like peppers and garlic helps.
- Urinate often.
- Avoid warm places and those with limited air flow (stuffy rooms). Feeling hot can add to nausea.
- Sit at least somewhat upright after meals to reduce gastric reflux.
- Eat a snack before getting up, going to bed and/or during the night, such as:
  - yogurt
  - juice
  - cheese
  - fruit
  - smoothie
  - bread/crackers
  - sandwich
  - nuts
- Get out of bed very slowly, sitting for a minute before you stand. Avoid sudden movements.
- Avoid brushing teeth immediately after eating, and don't use toothpaste if it increases nausea.
- Rest as often as needed, with feet up and head slightly elevated.
- Get plenty of fresh air, some sunshine, and light exercise as tolerated.
- Open windows when cooking or use exhaust fan to eliminate odors. Grill outdoors when possible.
- Avoid stress and ask for help. Consider counseling to deal with emotions related to being ill.