

Information and Tips for Family and Friends of Women Suffering Pregnancy Sickness

Watching a loved one suffer with nausea and vomiting in pregnancy or hyperemesis gravidarum can be really tough and it can be harder still to know how best to help and support them.

some tips and advice from women who have been through it about what helped them:

- Text her regularly to let her know you are thinking of her
- Don't be upset if she doesn't return texts or phone calls straight away; it can be really hard to look at screens or talk on the phone when you are feeling/being sick!
- Avoid being overly 'gushy' and excited about the baby and pregnancy; she may be feeling resentful about the baby and depressed about the pregnancy even if it was much wanted and planned. By being too excited you may make her feel even more isolated.
- Try not to question her about the safety of medications she is on; if her doctor has prescribed them then it is because she needs them. If you have concerns then have a look at our treatment pages or research pages for further information about the medications.
- If you are able then offer to look after any older children for a couple of hours as and when you can.
- Remember that smells, bright lights, loud noises and other sensory stimulation can all bring on vomiting so try to reduce these factors for her (especially smells).
- If you bring food for her family then make sure it is not strong smelling or contain garlic (cold food is best) and don't be upset if she doesn't want to eat any food you have brought.
- Vomiting in front of others can be humiliating for some women so be sensitive to this.
- Try to listen without giving advice, or telling her about other people's glowing pregnancies or the women you know who was sick all the time but still went into work... remember that pregnancy sickness has a whole spectrum of severity from mild to life threatening!
- Bear in mind that some of the medications can cause mild drowsiness and confusion; be aware that she may find conversation a struggle; it can be nice to listen though.
- If she is struggling to use a computer but would like to access support via text through this website then offer to fill in the online form for her or contact her regional leader via the support network page.

It can be great to have visitors when she feels up to it but here are some do's and don'ts for visiting times:

DO:

- Offer to pick up any shopping or prescriptions on your way round.
- Bring some magazines and books (but bear in mind she may not be up to reading/watching) - Downloading some audio-books for her could be really wonderful!
- If you go to the loo, give it a quick clean... there is nothing worse than vomiting into an unclean toilet!!!
- If she is largely bed bound then offer to change/wash the bed sheets for her.
- If you put any washing on for her don't use scented fabric softener.
- If she is struggling with young children then offer to play with them while she has a lie down.
- Make sure you wash any mugs or pots before you leave.

DON'T:

- Wear perfume.
- Eat garlic or curry the night before a visit.
- Smoke before visiting.
- Bring flowers as a gift; as well meaning as they are the smell and colours can trigger vomiting.
- Expect her to make tea and coffee... make it yourself!
- Bring noisy children with you.
- Focus on the pregnancy or the illness; try to talk about 'normal' things.
- Leave any mess for her to clear up!

If you visit a friend or relative who is suffering with pregnancy sickness or hyperemesis gravidarum and you are concerned that they are very dehydrated (dry lips and tongue, dry skin etc) or they seem confused or drowsy then call their doctor or take them to hospital.

Here are some quotes from sufferers of Hyperemesis Gravidarum about how their friends could have helped:

"If you are a smoker, it might be best to stay away - or change clothes before you go round. Don't tell the sufferer that people usually start to feel better after 12 weeks - it gives false hope. Do tell them that they won't feel like this forever and there will be an end to it - when I was depressed, suffering from HG and pregnant with my first child, I thought I would never feel normal again!! Do go to the doctors with them and push for treatment for them - they may be too weak, tired, ill to push for it themselves and when you are feeling low arguing is the last thing that you want but it might be exactly what is needed to get the help they need. Give her a cuddle and let her cry if thats what she wants to do and sometimes when you've got HG having a good cry is all you want to do."

Anne Burns, HG sufferer

"Never visit a person with hyperemesis and say you had morning sickness, you know what they are going through! It is NOT morning sickness!"

Sarah Vermillion Stevens, HG sufferer

"If she's laid up in bed make sure her surroundings are clean and there are sick bowls, tissues etc to hand. Physical contact (even close proximity) with older kids & partner may be difficult & sleeping arrangements may need to be altered for a while."

Asiyah Aziz, HG sufferer

"Under no circumstances mention the phrase "have you tried ginger?" or "I hear ginger helps" or "being sick is a good sign, means it's a healthy pregnancy". No help whatsoever to the HG sufferer!"

Pauline Turner, HG sufferer



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Contact us for more information

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