Experts: “Morning Sickness” Is an Inaccurate Expression

While moms-to-be commonly experience nausea or vomiting in the morning, these symptoms can also occur throughout the day.

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When women experience queasiness and puking during pregnancy, the unpleasant feelings are often called “morning sickness.” But new findings from the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom published in the British Journal of General Practice suggest that the term is misleading and inaccurate because these symptoms can occur anytime.

For the investigation, researchers used diary entries from 256 pregnant women about their experiences with nausea and vomiting. Scientists then used this information to map the likelihood of these symptoms occurring during each hour of the day. (Women noted symptoms from the day they found out they were pregnant until the 60th day of their pregnancy.)

About 95% of participants reported at least one of these symptoms during the course of the study, while 58% said they experienced both.

Although vomiting was more likely to occur between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m., many women reported throwing up well into the evening. Researchers also found that women felt nauseous throughout the entire day, not just in the a.m. In addition, women were more likely to experience nausea and vomiting between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. (Results also noted that during this one-hour period 82% of women complained of nausea, and 29% said they vomited.)

When comparing symptom occurrence during the first seven weeks of pregnancy, findings showed that the later the week, the more likely women were to experience nausea and vomiting. (The probability of feeling nauseous was at its highest in weeks five to seven and vomiting in week seven.)

According to researchers, “morning sickness” implies that queasiness and puking rarely occur later in the day, which makes the description misleading and inaccurate.

“If a pregnant women experiences sickness in the afternoon, she may feel that this is unusual and wrong, or if she experiences no vomiting but feels nauseated all day, she might think she is not covered by the term ‘morning sickness,’” said Roger Gadsby, a professor at the institution’s

Warwick Medical School and the lead author of the study. “And those women who experience severe symptoms feel it trivializes the condition.”

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