

**Patient
Information**

Your baby's movements during pregnancy

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about your baby's movements during pregnancy. It may also be helpful if you are concerned that your baby has not been moving as much as usual, or you feel that your baby's movements have changed.

Why are my baby's movements important?

A change in your baby's individual pattern of movement can be an important warning sign that your baby is unwell. Sadly we know that 2 out of 3 women who experienced a stillbirth, when thinking back had noticed that their baby's movements had reduced or changed before their baby died.

When can I expect to first feel my baby move?

A pregnant woman feeling her baby's movements is one of the first signs of life. These movements are seen as a sign of a baby's wellbeing. A baby's movements are generally first felt between 16 and 24 weeks of pregnancy, and soon develop into a pattern. These movements may be a discrete kick, flutter, swish or roll. The type of movements may change as pregnancy progresses. You should feel the baby move more and more up until around 32 weeks when they stay roughly the same until you give birth.

What are reduced fetal movements?

A baby's movements should be monitored by their mother, who should become an expert in their pattern. We do not expect each baby to move a set number of times each day, as they are all different and have different patterns of movement.

You are advised to contact your midwife or local Maternity Unit if you are worried that your baby's movements have become less or have changed in any way.

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Department

**Maternity
Services**

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**Patient
Information**

Why do we investigate a change in baby's movements?

Reduced or changed fetal movements may just be a one-off occurrence, but may be a sign that your baby is not growing as well as expected or that your placenta is not working as well as it should be. A reduction in your baby's movements can sometimes be an important warning sign that your baby is unwell. By us listening to your baby's heart beat and carrying out an assessment, we can find out why this is happening. We might change the way we monitor your pregnancy as a result.

What if I am unsure about my baby's movements?

You are less likely to be aware of your baby's movements when you are active or busy.

If you are not sure whether your baby has been moving as much as usual, you should rest (where possible lie down on your side) and concentrate on your baby's movements for the next 1 to 2 hours. If after this time you are still not sure or have concerns about your baby's movements you should contact the Maternity Advice Line immediately. The number is at the end of this leaflet.

If you feel that your baby has moved well during this time, we still advise you to be aware of your baby's movements and never hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns.

Unless you are trained to use a fetal heart doppler/sonic aid, we strongly urge you **do not** check your own baby's heart rate as you may think your own heart rate or placental sounds are your baby's heart rate. It is not just the presence of the heartbeat we are looking for, but also the rate and pattern of baby's heartbeat.

Always seek professional help immediately if you are worried.

**Patient
Information**

I am worried about my baby's movements what should I do?

If this is the first time you have been concerned about your baby's movements:

- **you are less than 28 weeks pregnant** Please contact the maternity advice line (telephone number is listed at the end of this leaflet) and they will advise you which is the best place for you to be seen.
At this point it is too early to do a Cardiotocograph (CTG) monitoring of your baby, so the midwife will listen to the baby's heartbeat over a few minutes with a hand held machine (doppler)
- **you are more than 28 weeks pregnant**
Please contact the maternity advice line (telephone number is listed at the end of this leaflet) and they will advise you where you should go for an assessment of your baby and to carry out a Cardiotocograph monitoring (CTG)

Get in touch immediately, it is important that you are seen the same day.

What is a CTG monitoring?

CTG monitoring allows your baby's heartbeat to be recorded over a period of time, usually about 30 minutes. The results are printed onto paper. The different elements of the baby's heartbeat trace can then be checked by a midwife or doctor. Having a CTG involves having 2 electrical contacts called transducers, held on your tummy with stretchy fabric bands, while sitting up in a chair or on a bed.

These transducers record your baby's heartbeat pattern and also detect any tightening's and how your baby is responding to these. If you feel movements during the CTG monitoring and the monitoring and assessment is normal, you will be able to go home.

If there are any concerns with your baby's heartrate pattern the doctor on call and midwife caring for you will discuss this and make a plan with you. This may include an ultrasound scan or making a plan to deliver your baby. They will discuss this with you and give you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have.

**Patient
Information**

I have been seen before but I am still worried about my baby's movements, what should I do?

If you have been seen before with concerns about your baby's movements, and have another period where you are worried about your baby's movements, even if it is later the same day please get in touch with:

- Maternity/Day Assessment Unit during daytime/office hours (telephone number at the end of this leaflet)
- Maternity Triage in the Women's Centre at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital if it is out of office hours.

You will be asked to come into hospital for an assessment and if you are over 28 weeks pregnant a CTG monitoring.

An ultrasound scan will also be arranged to measure how your baby is growing and how much amniotic fluid is around the baby. The CTG and ultrasound findings will be discussed with you by the midwife caring for you and the doctor on call.

Do not hesitate to contact your midwife or the maternity unit for advice; no matter how many times your baby's movements are reduced.

Contact information

Maternity Advice Line

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital
Tel: 0300 422 5541
Open 24 hours

Aveta Birth Centre

Cheltenham
Tel: 0300 4222324
Open 24 hours

Stroud Birth Centre

Tel: 0300 421 8018
Open 24 hours

Day Assessment

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital
Tel: 0300 422 6104
Monday to Friday, 8:30 to 4:30pm

**Patient
Information**

Maternity Assessment Centre

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4373

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 12:30pm

Further information

Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

Website: www.rcog.org.uk/en/patients/patient-leaflets/your-babys-movements-in-pregnancy/

Kicks Count

Website: www.kickscount.org.uk/

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