

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.

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 fetal 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 your pregnancy progresses.

What are reduced fetal movements?

A baby's movements are monitored by their mother, who is 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 changed in any way.

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

Why do we investigate reduced movements?

Reduced 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.

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Patient Information

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 performing 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 not sure about my baby's movements?

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 hour. If after this time you are still not sure or have any 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 hour, 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. 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 before the baby died. Never go to sleep ignoring a reduction in your baby's movements.

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:

Please contact your community midwife or the Maternity Triage (the telephone number is listed at the end of this leaflet).

Patient Information

You will be advised on where to be seen. At this point it is too early to do a Cardiotocograph (CTG) monitoring so the midwife will listen to your baby's heartbeat over a few minutes with a hand held machine (doppler).

If you are more than 28 weeks pregnant Please contact Maternity Triage (the telephone number is listed at the end of this leaflet). You will be advised on where you should attend 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. This is done while you are sitting up in a chair or on a bed.

The 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 assessment is normal, you will be discharged home.

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 reduced fetal 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 the hospital for an assessment and a CTG.

Patient Information

An ultrasound scan will also be arranged to measure how your baby is growing and how much amniotic fluid is around the baby.

If the CTG and your assessment are normal, and you feel your baby move you will be allowed to go home.

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/Maternity Triage

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 5541

Open 24 hours

Aveta Birth Centre

Cheltenham Tel: 0300 422 2324

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

Maternity Assessment Centre

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4373

Further information

Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

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

Kicks Count

Website: www.kickscount.org.uk/

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