



Your Baby's Movements in Pregnancy

Information for Mothers

What are normal movements?

Most women usually begin to feel their baby move between 18 and 20 weeks of pregnancy but some will not become aware of movements until after this. Fetal movements can be described as anything from a kick, flutter, swish or roll. The type of movement may change as your pregnancy progresses.

How often should my baby move?

There is no specific number of normal movements. Your baby should develop an individual pattern of movements that you will become aware of. They will have sleep periods during which they will not move but these rarely last longer than 90 minutes. The number of movements tends to increase until 32 weeks of pregnancy and then stay about the same. It is important to remember that you should continue to feel your baby move right up to the time you go into labour and throughout labour too.

Why are my baby's movements important?

Feeling your baby move provides reassurance that they are well. A reduction in fetal movements or a change in the pattern can sometimes be an important warning sign that a baby is unwell. Reduced movements can be associated with stillbirth. This is a risk for any pregnancy. Most women who experience one episode of a reduction in their baby's movements will have a straightforward pregnancy and go on to deliver a healthy baby.

We have produced this leaflet to help you know what to do if you are concerned about your baby's movements.

What do I need to do if I am worried about my baby's movements?

If you feel that your baby is not moving as much as usual, you should lie down on your left side and focus on the movements for the next 2 hours. If you do not feel 10 or more separate movements during these 2 hours, you should seek help as soon as possible (see overleaf).

You must not wait until the next day to seek help if you are worried about your baby's movements

1 in every 200 births in England ends in stillbirth

YOUR BABY'S MOVEMENTS ARE AN IMPORTANT WAY OF CHECKING THEY ARE WELL

If you are less than 26 weeks pregnant you should contact your Community Midwife who will arrange to see you as soon as possible. If you have any difficulties with contacting your Community Midwife please contact the Community Midwives on 01925 662092 or the Antenatal Day Unit on 01925 275200.

If you are more than 26 weeks pregnant you should contact the Antenatal Day Unit on 01925 275200 or Labour ward 01925 662334/662059 who will arrange to see you as soon as possible.

What will happen when I am seen?

The care you will be given will depend on your stage of pregnancy:

If you are less than 26 weeks pregnant the midwife will listen to your baby's heartbeat and perform a full antenatal check-up. If there are any additional concerns it may be necessary to refer you to the hospital the same day for further assessment.

If you are over 26 weeks pregnant the Antenatal Day Unit or Labour Ward will listen to your baby's heartbeat and perform a full antenatal check-up. They will put you on a machine that monitors your baby's heartbeat. This can last up to an hour and provides information about your baby's wellbeing. Many babies will start to move normally after this and you will usually be able to go home. In some cases it may be necessary for you to be seen by a doctor and an ultrasound scan may be arranged. Very rarely it may be safer for your baby to be born as soon as possible.

What if my baby's movements are reduced again?

If after discharge you are still not happy with your baby's movement, you must contact the Antenatal Day Unit or Labour Ward immediately, even if everything was normal when you were initially seen. **Never hesitate to contact the Antenatal Day Unit or Labour Ward for advice; no matter how many times this happens.**

Contact details

Community Midwives: 01925 662092

Antenatal Day Unit: 01925 275200 / 275203

Labour ward: 01925 662334 / 662059

Sources and acknowledgements

This information is based on the RCOG guideline 'Reduced Fetal Movements' (February 2011) and the Patient Information Leaflet 'Your baby's movements in pregnancy: information for you' (August 2012).