



Are you aware of your baby's movements during pregnancy?

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- I am a 34-week pregnant mother. This is my first pregnancy. From 20 weeks onwards, I felt the baby's movements normally. But as of this morning, the baby's movements are less. Is this dangerous?

This leaflet informs you about the movements of the baby during pregnancy. This information is helpful for you to understand in case your baby does not move normally or shows a change in movements.

You will learn about the following;

- What are the baby's normal movements?
- What factors influence your baby's movements?
- What should you do if your baby's movements decrease or change?
- What should you do when your baby's movements slow down or change?

What are the normal movements of the baby during pregnancy?

Most mothers begin to feel the baby's movements around 18-20 weeks of pregnancy. However, if this is your first pregnancy, you will usually feel the baby's movements after about 20 weeks. You'll start feeling the baby's movements around 16 weeks if you've had previous pregnancies. Baby's movements are felt as kicking, shaking and rolling.

As the baby grows, movement patterns and the frequency of movements are determined by the baby's activity level. Usually, the peak of these movements can be observed in the evening. Generally, the baby sleeps for 20-40 minutes during both the day and night. In some cases, their sleep increases to about 90 minutes. Thus, when the baby is sleeping, they do not move.

An increase in these movements can usually be observed until around 32 weeks and then shows the same movement level until delivery. But during this time, changes in movement patterns can be seen. If you are busy, you may not observe all the baby's movements. However, it is very important to pay attention to the baby's movements until the time of delivery. The baby also moves during labour.

Why is it important to be aware of the baby's movements?

Your baby's movements during pregnancy are important for you to know that the baby is doing well inside the womb. Suppose you feel a decrease or change in your baby's movement; it may indicate that the child has some difficulty or problem. Therefore, informing your public health midwife or the doctor as soon as possible is essential. It will enable you to make sure that the baby is fine.

How many movements are considered normal?

There is no fixed numerical value for what is considered normal movements. You should be aware of the baby's movements and movement patterns throughout your pregnancy. Raising concern about a decrease or change in the movements felt is very important.

What factors influence the mother to feel the baby's movements?

When you are busy or engaged in some work, there is less chance of paying attention to the baby's movements. Also, monitoring the baby's movements is relatively difficult when the placenta is in front of the uterus. Whether your baby is head-down or back-down does not affect how you feel the

baby's movements. However, if the baby's back is towards the front of your uterus, you tend to feel less movement than if the baby's back is towards your back.



What causes reduced movements in the baby?

Medicines such as painkillers can enter the baby's blood and reduce movements. Smoking and drinking alcohol also have effects on the baby's movements. Also, if the baby is in distress, the movements may decrease. Rarely, muscle or nerve problems affecting the baby can cause the baby's movements to slow down or stop.

Is it important to chart the baby's movements?

There is insufficient evidence to support routine charting of the baby's movements. Paying attention to your baby's movements and movement patterns is more important. When you observe a change in your baby's movements, you need to seek help accordingly.

What should be done when a lack of movement or a change in the baby's movements is observed?

When any change or decrease in the baby's movements is observed, it is essential to meet the doctor and seek advice immediately. You should not delay seeking help by sleeping or measuring the baby's heart rate with devices available at home. The treatment and care you receive will depend on how many weeks you are in your pregnancy.

If the baby is less than 24 weeks

Most women first notice the baby's movements around 18-20 weeks. If you don't feel the baby's movements by 24 weeks, you should immediately inform your midwife and doctor. They will refer you for an ultrasound scan to confirm your baby's well-being.

If the baby is between 24-28 weeks

In this case, seeing your public health midwife and the doctor is essential. You will be directed to a complete prenatal check-up. The baby's heartbeat will be checked. The size of your uterus will be measured, including blood pressure measurement and urine testing for protein. If the size of your uterus is smaller than it should be, an ultrasound scan will be performed to assess your baby's growth.

If the baby is more than 28 weeks

In this case, it is essential to inform the doctor immediately. You should not delay seeking treatment. Both you and your baby will be assessed by performing a complete prenatal check-up, including checking the baby's heart rate and growth. Your baby's heartbeat will be monitored by CTG for about 20-30 minutes. You may notice that your baby's heart rate increases as he or she moves. You will also be referred for an ultrasound scan to assess your baby's growth, the amount of amniotic fluid and the blood flow. After confirming that your baby is fine, you should be able to go home.

Many mothers who experience reduced fetal movements can give birth to a healthy baby. However, if a problem is identified, the doctor will discuss it with you in detail. You will also sometimes be given follow-up scans. If there is a risk to the baby, you may be advised to deliver the baby before the due date. However, all this depends on many factors, including the health status of the mother and baby.

What should you do when a decrease in the baby's movements is observed again?

It is important to keep an eye on the baby's movements even after you go home after confirming that the baby is well. Suppose you observe any further change or loss of movement during this observation; you should immediately inform the doctor and seek hospital admission.

Around 36 weeks of pregnancy, the maternity clinic will give you a fetal movement card. If you do not feel fetal movements for about 4 hours and if you feel a change or lack of movement pattern within 10 hours, you should take care of it. You should first relax on left side and lying on the bed and pay attention to the movements. Even then, if you don't feel any movement, you should go to the hospital immediately.