

Baby's movements during pregnancy: What is normal?

When should I start to feel my baby move?

Your baby will start to move early in your pregnancy. You usually don't feel your baby moving until 18 -22 weeks. The first movements of your baby can be mistaken for stomach gas or feel like gentle flutters. As your baby grows, the feeling of your baby moving will become more definite.

Most women will be aware of their baby moving by about the 20th – 22nd week of pregnancy. If this is not your first pregnancy, you may feel your baby moving earlier than 20 weeks.

You may not feel your baby moving every day until the 24th week of pregnancy. After this time your baby should move every day. Your baby's movements can feel like kicks, stretches, pushes and sometimes you may feel your baby hiccupping.

Your baby moves because their muscles and nerves are developing. Like adults, each baby has its own individual pattern of movement. It is important for you to get to know the normal movements for your baby.

During the last few weeks of your pregnancy the movements of your baby may feel different. As your baby grows, there will be less space in your uterus. Their pattern of movements should still be similar.

When you are in early labour your baby should still continue to move a little. You may not be as aware of your baby moving because you may be distracted by your labour.

Your midwife or doctor will be interested in your baby's movement patterns. Contact the Delivery Suite, your midwife or doctor if you are concerned about any changes in your baby's movement patterns or frequency.

What can affect how you feel your baby's movement patterns?

Several factors can affect your baby moving, and how you feel their movement. Some of the more common factors are listed below:

- Your placenta is situated at the front of your uterus
- You are overweight
- You have been very busy
- You are taking sedative medications, steroids, alcohol or other drugs
- You have very little, or more than the normal amount of fluid around the baby
- Your baby is smaller than expected for your period of pregnancy.

What counts as one movement for your baby?

A movement is one kick or one stretch or one pushing feeling. When your baby is active it is normal for your baby to move ten times within a two hour period.

What should you do if you think the baby has not moved as much as normal?

If you are concerned that your baby has not moved as much as usual, count their movements for two hours. Contact the Delivery Suite or your midwife if your baby has not moved ten times in the two hours.

When should you contact the Delivery Suite or your midwife?

- Immediately if you have not felt your baby move at all through the day.
- If you feel that your baby is moving less frequently over a few days.
- If you feel that your baby's pattern of movements has changed.
- If your baby has moved less than ten times in a two hour period.

What will happen when you contact the Delivery Suite or your midwife?

- You will be asked questions about your baby's movements.
- You may be asked to come to the hospital. At the hospital, the staff will listen to your baby's heartbeat. A special machine will be used to record your baby's heart beat. This test is called a CTG. A CTG will take about 30-45 minutes to complete.
- Hospital staff may also arrange an ultrasound scan to check the fluid levels in your uterus, and to check if the baby and placenta appear to be healthy.
- In most situations you will be able to go home within two to three hours.

We prefer that you contact us with any concerns you may have about your baby. Even if you have been previously checked by the Delivery Suite staff or your midwife, we would like you to contact us again if you are still worried about your baby.

What if I need help in speaking in English?

Professional interpreters are available if you need help understanding or speaking in English. You may have a family member or friend present, but all communication about your treatment should be through a professional interpreter. Interpreter services are free and confidential.

It is your right to ask for an interpreter if one is not offered to you. The staff will book the interpreter for you.

If you need to use an interpreter to contact us, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450.

Contact numbers

Delivery Suite:

Your Midwife:



This resource was developed by the Royal Hospital for Women. Funding for translations was provided by the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District Multicultural Health Service, February 2014.