Reduced Fetal Movements

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It is not true that babies move less towards end of pregnancy

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You should continue to feel your baby move right up to the time you go into labour and whilst you are in labour too

- If you think your baby’s movements have slowed or stopped, contact the hospital immediately on 01223 217217.
- Do not put off calling until the end of the day to see what happens.
- Do not worry about phoning. It is important for the midwife to know if you baby’s movements have slowed down or stopped.
It can be useful to become familiar with the individual pattern of your baby’s movements. If you are concerned about reduced movements please do not wait until the next day – see guidance below.

What are fetal movements?

From approximately 18 to 20 weeks of your pregnancy you may start to notice tiny sensations in your uterus (womb). These sensations can initially feel like ‘flutterings’ and are the result of your baby moving around. Midwives and obstetricians will refer to these sensations as ‘fetal movements’. As your pregnancy progresses and your baby becomes bigger and stronger, his/her movements will become more noticeable. Your baby may also get hiccups which can feel like rhythmic jerking movements.

Due to your baby continually growing throughout the pregnancy there will consequently become less room in your uterus. The baby’s movements may feel different but they should still be at frequent intervals throughout the course of the day.

You should become familiar with the pattern of fetal movements for your baby, in order that you can recognise periods of the day when your baby has been quiet and not moved as much or when you are expecting him/her to.
If you notice a reduction in baby’s movements what should you do?

It may be that you have been busy; for example at work, shopping or caring for other family members and have not noticed your baby’s movements. We would advise that you lie on your left side and focus on your baby’s movements for two hours.

If during the two hour period you feel ten or more separate movements from your baby there is no need for further follow up. You should make a conscious effort to monitor your baby’s movements throughout the rest of the day and the following few days to ensure your baby has resumed his/her normal pattern. However, if you have any concerns or are unsure please contact a midwife for advice as detailed below.

If you do not feel ten or more separate movements within these two hours you must immediately contact the maternity assessment unit: Clinic 23 on 01223 217217.

What will happen if you telephone the maternity assessment unit: clinic 23?

If you are less than 28 weeks pregnant:

A midwife will ask you how your pregnancy has been going so far, and you may be invited to attend the maternity assessment unit: clinic 23, which is within the delivery unit, Level 3 of the Rosie Hospital or you may be asked to contact your community midwife.
The health care professional who sees you will ask you some questions about your health and your pregnancy and will listen to the baby’s heart beat with a hand-held Doppler device. If all is well you will be sent home with advice on monitoring your baby’s movements and what to do if you experience reduced movements again. If you require further investigation you will be referred to an obstetric team at the Rosie Hospital.

**If you are more than 28 weeks pregnant:**

A midwife will ask you some questions about your health and your pregnancy and you may be invited to attend the maternity assessment unit: clinic 23 within the delivery unit, Level 3 of the Rosie Hospital.

An assessment will be made by a midwife and monitoring of the fetal heart will be undertaken using a cardiotocograph (CTG). The CTG monitors your baby’s heart rate continuously over a period of time, usually 20 minutes. Two sensors are strapped to your abdomen (bump) and the readings are printed on paper. Often during the CTG you will feel your baby become active and you will be asked to record these movements by pressing a button attached to the machine.

If the CTG is normal and no other risk factors are identified you will be discharged home. You will be advised on monitoring your baby’s movements and what to do if you experience reduced movements again. If few or no fetal movements are recorded or other risk factors having been identified, you will advised to see an obstetric doctor and talk through the options available so that the any follow-up can be arranged, if needed.
This may include an ultrasound scan to assess the fluid volume around the baby and to assess the baby’s growth.

Please never hesitate to contact clinic 23 if you are unsure about your baby’s movements - we are here to reassure and support you.

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Do not use any hand-held monitors Doppler’s or phone apps to check your baby’s heartbeat. Even if you detect a heartbeat this does not mean the baby is well.
We are a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

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