

## How much should my baby move?

Feeling your baby move is a reassuring sign that baby is growing and developing. You will usually feel the first movements at around 18–20 weeks pregnancy. If you have been pregnant before you might notice movements sooner than this at around 16 weeks. The first movements can be hard to distinguish from gas or tummy rumblings. As your baby grows you will be able to tell the difference. Some women describe the first movements as 'flutters' or 'swishes' rather than 'kicks'.

Your baby will be moving a lot however many of the movements are too small for you to feel. You won't feel small movements such as thumb sucking or stretching of fingers and toes. You should feel bigger movements like kicking, stretching of arms, rolling and perhaps hiccups (small rhythmic twitches). You should feel movements right up until the time you go into labour. There are no rules about how often your baby should move – each mother and baby are different.

## What do baby movements tell us about your baby?

Usually an active baby is a healthy baby. Your baby gets oxygen and nutrients from the placenta through the umbilical cord. So a healthy mum and a healthy placenta, usually means a baby that moves a lot. If for some reason the placenta is not working well, the baby can become unwell. A baby that is not well will move less. That is why your midwife or doctor will ask about your baby's movements at each visit.

Some women feel fewer movements, even when their babies are quite healthy. Women who are a larger body size, or who have their placenta at the front of their uterus, may not feel baby movements as strongly.

## Take time to learn your baby's movement pattern

From about 28 weeks we recommend you spend some time each day focussing on your baby's movements. Most women will have a constant reminder of baby's movements by the many kicks they feel. There is no need to write down how many times baby moves, but you can do this if you wish to.

When your baby is awake it is good to practice feeling for movements. Take time each day to have a rest and 'check-in' with your baby. Many women find that their baby's are more active at certain times of day (e.g. in the evenings or in the mornings). It is a good idea to learn what your baby's normal movement pattern is. You will often feel the movements best if you are sitting or lying down on your side. Some women don't notice movements while they are busy with other things.

## Your baby's movements in late pregnancy and before labour

A healthy baby will continue to have regular movements and be active your entire pregnancy. In the last weeks the baby will start to run out of space. Baby's movements should occur as often as usual and baby should still have plenty of shuffling, wriggling and vigorous whole body movements.

## Do babies move all the time?

Even perfectly healthy babies don't move all the time. They have sleep and wake cycles, similar to a newborn baby. Baby should still have plenty of active spells between sleep times. When you think of a healthy toddler, they will have a run around and have a regular daytime nap. This is normal for a toddler. But if that toddler were to take to the couch for a long time when they didn't normally sleep, you might wonder if your toddler was sick. Your baby is similar, if they are not moving much

when they are normally active, there may be a reason to be concerned.

Any major change in your baby's normal pattern of movements at any stage of your pregnancy can be a concern, and you must contact your midwife or doctor immediately if this happens.

## **What do you do if you are concerned you baby is moving less?**

You should always remember that normal movements are a sign of a healthy baby. Most experts agree a healthy baby will usually move at least 10 times in 2 hours. If you feel there is a decrease in normal daily activity of your baby, this may be a cause for concern.

If you have concerns about your baby's movements, you should sit in a quiet place and focus on feeling your baby's movements.

It is important to contact your Midwife or Doctor immediately if:

a) Your baby stops moving

*or*

b) You feel your baby is moving a lot less than usual.

Never wait until the next day. Ensure you are seen by them on that same day even if it is the weekend.

## **What does the check-up involve?**

Your LMC or Hospital Midwife will do an antenatal check just like one of your normal pregnancy visits; they will check baby's growth and heartbeat. In addition to this, a cardiotocograph (CTG) where your baby's heartbeat is recorded on a monitor for about 20 minutes will be done, to check everything is normal. Sometimes an ultrasound scan may also be ordered. In a very small number of cases not feeling the baby moving may be the only sign that is noticed before a baby is stillborn.

Even if after the check up you find you are still feeling baby is having less movements you must contact your Midwife or Doctor again for another check up.

## **Contact us**

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*We wish to thank and acknowledge this information is sourced from and used with permission:*

*Midcentral Health. Baby movement - information for women*

*and*

*Australian and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance. Pregnancy- your baby's movements and what they mean*

