

## Baby's movements : What is normal?

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Royal Hospital for Women

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### ***When should I start to feel my baby move?***

- Babies start moving early in pregnancy, but you usually don't feel anything for a few months. Initial movements can be mistaken for wind or feel like gentle flutters. As the baby grows the feeling of movement becomes more definite.
- Most women will be aware of movements by about 20 weeks, sometimes earlier especially, if this is not your first pregnancy, and it can often be a bit later.
- Until 24 weeks of pregnancy you may not feel daily movements. After this time movements should occur daily and can feel like kicks, stretches, pushes or sometimes you may be aware of hiccoughs.
- Movements are related to development of the baby's muscle and nervous system and are therefore considered a reassuring sign. Like adults, each baby has its own individual pattern of movement and it is important for you to become familiar with what is normal for your baby rather than comparing with someone else.
- During the last few weeks of the pregnancy the movements may feel different- probably due to there being less space in your uterus, but the pattern of movements should still be similar.
- When you are in early labour the baby should still continue to move a little, although you may be distracted by the labour and less conscious of the movements.
- Your midwife or doctor will be interested in your baby's movement patterns and will ask you to contact the hospital if you have any concerns about a change in patterns or frequency.

### ***What can influence your perception of the baby's movement patterns?***

Several factors can affect your baby's movement patterns or the way in which you sense them. Some of the more common reasons are listed below. Please discuss these with your midwife or doctor if you would like more information about any of these issues:

- 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?***

- One kick or a stretch or a pushing feeling- therefore it is not unusual to feel 10 movements in a very short space of time!
- If your baby moves at least 10 times over a two hour period when your baby is normally active, you can be reassured that this is within a normal range.

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

- Once you become aware that the pattern has changed, or you have not been aware of the baby moving during the day you should focus completely on your baby's movements for a couple of hours. If your baby moves less than 10 times during this period we suggest you call and speak to a midwife.

### ***When should you call a midwife?***

- If you have not felt your baby move at all during the course of a day (do not wait until the next day to call)
- If the baby moves less and less and over the course of a few days, or the type or pattern of movements is very different
- If you feel less than 10 movements in a two hour period of conscious monitoring (as above)
- Anytime you are concerned about your baby's movements

### ***What will happen after you call a midwife with your concerns?***

- Generally the midwife will ask you a few questions and if you have already spent two hours focusing on your baby's movements she will ask you to come to the hospital so that we can assess your situation, listen to your baby's heartbeat and perform a CTG.
- A CTG is a tracing of your baby's heart rate on a monitor and in most situations will provide the reassurance that all is well. The CTG takes about 30-45 minutes to perform. In most situations we will arrange an ultrasound scan for either the same or the following day to check that the fluid levels are normal and the baby and placenta appear healthy. In most situations you will be able to go home within 2-3 hours.

### ***What do I do if I came in for assessment one day and have the same concerns a day or two later?***

Exactly the same - we would always rather that you call to discuss your concerns and if necessary come in for a reassuring check, not sit at home and worry.

### **Contact numbers**

Delivery Suite 9382 6100

Midwifery Group Practice: call your designated midwife

Endorsed June 20, 2013. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this information please send an email [RHWfeedback@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:RHWfeedback@health.nsw.gov.au)