

Information about fetal movements in pregnancy or the absence of it

Signs of movement during pregnancy

Information about fetal movements in pregnancy and experience of a low level of activity or absence of fetal movements.

What is the norm for movement of the fetus in the womb?

The majority of women start to feel that the baby moves in the womb at around the 20th week of pregnancy. If you are experiencing your first pregnancy you may not feel any movement until a period after the 20th week. If you have already had a child or children, you may feel signs of movement before week 20. This varies from person to person.

The frequency and type of movement you feel will change as your baby develops. Many babies are very active at certain times of the day. It is important that you familiarize yourself with your baby's movement patterns. Your baby will have sleep periods both during the day and night, usually between 20 and 40 minutes and seldom for more than 40 minutes. Your baby will not move while it is sleeping.

The majority of expectant mothers find that the number of movements per day increase up to about week 32 of the pregnancy and then stabilize at a level that continues until the baby is born.

The type of movement can change. Towards the end of the pregnancy the movement can be felt as a "wriggling" motion, with a reduction in kicking, but as a general rule there should not be a reduction in movement. You should feel your baby moving consistently in period up to birth and you should also feel movement during the birth.

Why is it important to feel the child moving in the womb?

When you feel your baby moving in the womb this is a good sign that all is well with the baby. If you experience that your baby is moving less and less this is often simply a normal variation. If however this continues for a number of hours, it could be an initial indication that all is not as it should be. It is therefore important that you contact the maternity ward for a checkup.

What is less than normal movement?

Researchers cannot stipulate the number of movements that are the norm for a healthy fetus. It is therefore important that you get to know your baby and its pattern of movements and activity during your pregnancy. It is changes in the pattern of movements that is the decisive factor for determining what is "less than normal". You know your baby better than anyone else!

One thing we can say with a degree of certainty is that a healthy baby seldom moves less than 10 times in two hours during a period when the baby is usually active.

What factors can influence your experience that the child is moving?

If you are active and busy there is less chance that you will feel activity from your baby.

If the placenta is to the front of the womb it can be difficult to feel your baby moving, particularly in the early stages of pregnancy.

What should you do if you are not sure if your baby's activity has reduced or is reducing?

Prior to week 24 of your pregnancy

If you find that there is a reduction in movement for a number of hours prior to week 24 of your pregnancy, you must contact your own doctor or midwife at the earliest opportunity.

After week 24 of your pregnancy

If you are uncertain whether your baby's movements are at a lower level than usual you should eat or drink something, preferably sweet. Then you must lie down on your left side, in peace and quiet and avoiding external disturbances such as telephones or other stimuli. Focus on the baby's movements for one to two hours and try to count the number of movements you feel. This is best done during a period when the baby is usually active.

If during this period you do not feel any movement from the baby you must immediately contact the maternity ward. If you feel less than ten separate movements during this two hour period you must telephone the maternity ward immediately.

If you are still concerned or uncertain about the baby's activity pattern you should telephone the maternity ward for advice.

If after counting your baby's movements you are reassured that all is well and that you can feel a good level of activity, there is no need to contact the maternity ward.

You must not wait until the next day or your next checkup if you are uncertain whether your baby is moving or is less active than usual. Contact the maternity ward without delay!

Do not trust apparatus that allows you to listen to the baby's heartbeats at home.

Telephone the maternity ward: 55 97 22 00

What we will do when you attend for a scheduled appointment at the maternity ward because you are feeling less activity in your baby?

The first thing we will do is to carry out a CTG examination. This means that we listen for fetal sounds and measure the level of activity in your womb for about 20 minutes. You will be given a button to push each time you feel a movement from your baby. We also take your blood pressure and test a urine sample.

On the basis of the results we get from these tests and what you tell us, we decide whether an ultrasound examination is necessary and whether you should be examined by a doctor. In some cases it may be necessary to arrange for hospitalization and inducement of the birth.

Most of the expectant mothers that experience an episode of reduced activity from the baby will have a pregnancy without complications and give birth to a healthy child.

When you return home after a checkup at the maternity ward or pre-natal clinic you will be asked to continue to monitor your baby's pattern of activity. If you should once again experience a reduction of movement you must again contact the ward or clinic.

Please do not hesitate to contact us by telephone regardless of the number of times you have done so previously for the same reason.

Source: Oslo University Hospital, Maternity Ward