



If you have any English language difficulties, please ask staff to book an interpreter.

From home contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 13 1450.

Services are provided free of charge. Ask staff if this information is available in your preferred language.

This document will give you information about what your baby’s movements mean. It also provides some tips on how you can keep a check on your baby’s health by being aware of their movements.

What is your baby doing in there?

As a mother, it is very exciting to feel your baby move. Your baby will be active during your entire pregnancy. You will first start to feel your baby move when you are between 16–22 weeks pregnant.

In the beginning you won’t feel your baby’s movements very often. As your baby grows, the movements will become obvious and you will gradually start to feel the movements more regularly.

You won’t feel small movements, such as thumb sucking or stretching of fingers and toes. You will feel kicking and rolling movements and perhaps hiccups (small rhythmic twitches) during the last trimester of your pregnancy.

All these movements are obvious in the last months of pregnancy and should be felt up to the time you go into labour.

What do movements say about your baby’s health?

Usually, an active baby is a healthy baby. Some women may not feel their baby move as much as others, even though their baby is doing well.

Women who are of larger body size, or whose placenta is located at the front of the uterus may not feel their baby’s movements as strongly.

How much should your baby move: should you count kicks?

Being aware of your baby’s movements each day is a very good habit to have during pregnancy. There is no need to keep a written record of your baby’s movements, although some women may want to.

We suggest that from 28 weeks (third trimester), you spend some time each day focussing on your baby’s movements. Most babies move around more in the morning and in the evening.

When your baby is awake you can practise feeling for movements. You will feel movements best when you relax while lying or sitting down. You will feel your baby’s movements least while standing, walking or if you are busy with other things.

Is it true that babies move less before labour?

There is no reason to believe that babies move less in the last few weeks before birth. It is important to remember that your baby should remain active during your entire pregnancy.

Do healthy babies move all the time?

Babies do not move all the time, even when they are perfectly healthy. All healthy babies will be quiet or asleep for short periods of time. Before birth, babies have similar sleep and wake cycles to those of a newborn baby.

To better understand your baby’s wake and sleep cycles, imagine a healthy toddler running around and then having a regular daytime nap. This is normal behaviour for a toddler.

But, if that toddler was to lie on the couch for a long time when they did not usually sleep, you would wonder if your toddler was sick.

Similarly, if your baby is quiet at a time when they are normally active, then there may be cause for concern.

What do you do if you are concerned about your baby's movements?

Always remember that normal movements are a sign of a healthy baby—when a healthy baby is awake they will usually move at least 10 times in two hours. If you feel a decrease in the normal daily activity of your baby this may be a cause for concern.

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

If you are still concerned, contact your midwife or doctor immediately. Never wait until the next day.

It is best not to delay contacting your care provider. Most of the time, your doctor or midwife will check your baby's heartbeat, and tell you that your baby's tests are normal. However, in a very small number of cases not feeling a baby moving is the only sign that is noticed before a baby is stillborn.

You should contact the hospital

- if your baby does not move at all one day. If this happens contact your care provider that very day or night. Do not wait until the next day.
- if your baby kicks less and less in the course of one day and you feel that there is too little activity from your baby.

We hope that this information has helped you get to know and understand what your baby's movements mean

Acknowledgments

This information brochure was compiled in 2010 and last updated in 2012, by health researchers from the Australia and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance (ANZSA) in consultation with ANZSA member organisations and the Queensland Centre for Mothers and Babies

Updated September 2014. This document has been developed having regard to general circumstances, in light of information available to the authors at the time of preparation. Please discuss your options with your midwife or doctor in relation to your own personal circumstances. If this is a hard copy it may not be the latest version of this document.

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