

Fetal /Baby Kick Counting

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What do I need to know about fetal movement?

Fetal movements also known as fetal/baby kicking are felt by the mother for the first time between 15 and 21 weeks. Most fetuses will not establish a pattern of movement until after 25 weeks, though most babies will not move the same amount each day. Some women think that babies move less as they grow larger due to lack of space. This is not true, however you may sense the quality of the movement has changed. As you approach your due date, the movements may seem less noticeable, but the actual number of movements should not decline significantly. Even women who are in labor should continue to notice fetal activity.

Mothers will often note that their fetuses move more at night and in the early morning hours. This may be related to the fact that during the day there may be more distractions that make it difficult for women to feel the baby's movements.

How do I know if my baby's kicking is normal?

Below is a suggested guideline that you can use to help count your baby's kicking. It is recommended that you notify your doctor if you think the baby is moving less than usual. It is important to note that there is no one standard definition of "normal" fetal/baby activity, though many guidelines use 5 to 10 movements in an hour.

It is recommended that you speak to your doctor regarding the actual guideline which they would want you to call them for.

How do I monitor fetal kicking?

It is recommended that you monitor fetal kicking as follows:

1. Preferably, after a meal. Find a quiet place without distractions and lie down on your left side. If you have been instructed to follow fetal kicking on an on-going basis, it is recommended that you monitor at the same time each day.
2. Place a hand on your abdomen.
3. Start counting fetal kicking. Any type of activity should be counted, not just big kicks. If you feel 3 or more movements in 30 minutes you can stop. If not, continue counting for a full hour.
4. If you do not feel 5 kicks in an hour, it is suggested that you have a snack or change your position and start a count for another hour. **If you feel less than 10 kicks in 2 hours, you should call your doctor.**



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Your doctor may recommend fetal heart rate monitoring and possibly ultrasound. In most cases fetal monitoring will be normal and the decrease in movement may be related to a fetal sleep cycle, or to a change in the baby's position.

If you have questions or concerns, you should ask your doctor.

References:

Neldam, S. Fetal Movement as an indicator of fetal wellbeing. Lancet 1980 1(8180): 1222-4.

Antepartum Fetal Surveillance. ACOG Practice Bulletin. #9. 1999.

For more patient fact sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenwichhospital.org and click on Patients, then Education.

Est. 11/11