

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU ARE CONCERNED:
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Why are my baby's movements important?

Why are we asking women to get to know their baby's movements?

One of the easiest ways to tell if your baby is healthy is to be aware of how much he or she is moving. Every baby is different and we are asking women to take time to become familiar with their baby's own individual pattern of movements. A reduction or change in **your** baby's movements is what is important.

What can affect my baby's movements?

You are less likely to be aware of your baby's movements when active or busy. Some drugs e.g. strong pain relief or sedatives can get into an unborn baby's circulation and affect the movements. Alcohol and smoking (active and passive smoking) may also affect the baby.

Why are my baby's movements important?

If you notice your baby is moving less than usual, or the pattern of movements has changed, this could be the first sign that your baby may not be well or is not growing properly in the womb. Research has shown that a reduction in the baby's movements may indicate an increased risk of stillbirth. You may hear your midwife or doctor referring to 'reduced fetal movement', or RFM for short.

What are the risks of stillbirth?

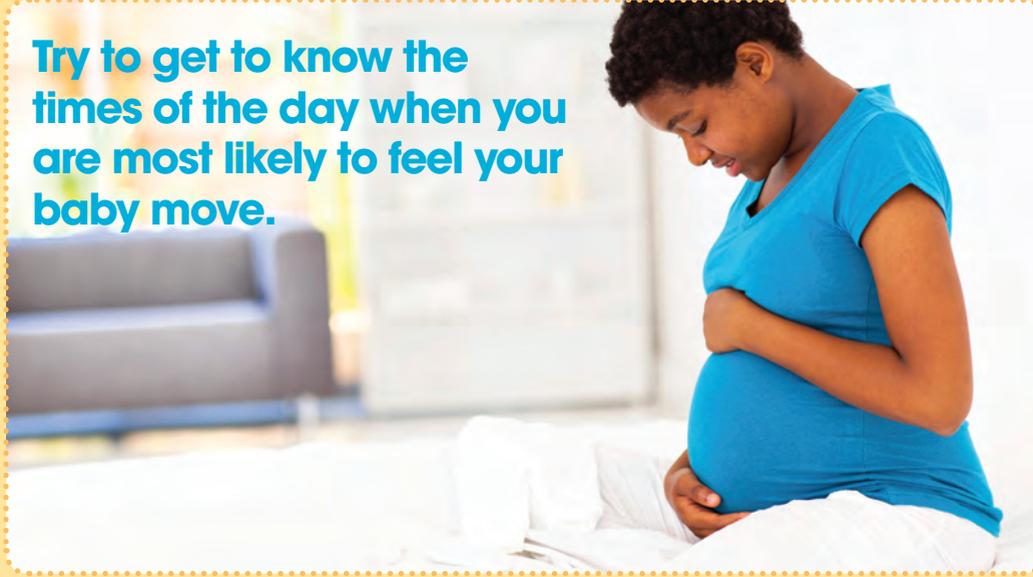
Stillbirth affects one in 200 babies after 24 weeks gestation and is one of the most common of the serious complications of pregnancy, affecting the lives of around 4,000 families every year in the UK.

One of the easiest ways to tell if your baby is healthy is to see how much he or she is moving. This booklet tells you what to look out for during your pregnancy.

Every baby is different. It is good to get to know your baby's own movements and the pattern of their sleeping and waking and report to us if you notice a reduction in these movements.



Try to get to know the times of the day when you are most likely to feel your baby move.



18-24
WEEKS



24-36
WEEKS



Most women begin to feel their baby move between 18-24 weeks. At first it may feel like 'bubbles', 'flutterings' or 'like trapped wind'. These are often very short and stop and start. It might take you a little while to be sure what you are feeling. But you will soon get to know the feelings. If this is your second baby, you will know what to look out for and may recognise your baby moving sooner.

Everyone is different when it comes to their movements. There are many reasons you might not feel movements as early as you expect. This includes your body weight, the position of your baby and the location of your placenta. What is important is your baby is growing well. Your midwife will be able to discuss this with you further at your 22 week check.

You will have your own way of describing your baby's own movements. Women often describe their baby's movements as 'rolling', 'kicking', 'pushing', 'jabs', 'elbowing' and 'stretches'.

Between 24-36 weeks you will start to recognise your baby's movements more quickly and become more used to the feeling. It is usually easier to feel your baby's movements when you are lying down, e.g. at night time. It is harder to feel your baby move when you are on your feet and moving around.

Try to get to know the times of the day you are most likely to feel your baby move. This will help you to know if he or she is moving less than normal or if movements have stopped.

Occasionally your baby will get hiccups. These do not count as movements. If you are unsure what you should expect when your baby hiccups, speak to your midwife.

