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Obstetricians
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Information for you Your baby's movements in pregnancy

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About this information

This information is for you if you would like to know about your baby's movements during pregnancy. It may also be helpful if you are concerned that your baby has not been moving as much as usual or if you feel that your baby's movements have changed.

It tells you about:

- what are normal movements for an unborn baby
- what affects how much you feel your baby move
- what you should do if your baby's movements are reduced or changed
- what care you will have if your baby's movements are reduced or changed.

This information aims to help you and your healthcare team make the best decisions about your care. It is not meant to replace advice from a doctor or midwife about your own situation.

What are normal movements for an unborn baby in pregnancy?

Most women are first aware of their baby moving when they are 18–20 weeks pregnant. However, if this is your first pregnancy, you may not become aware of movements until you are more than 20 weeks pregnant. If you have been pregnant before, you may feel movements as early as 16 weeks. Pregnant women feel their unborn baby's movements as a kick, flutter, swish or roll.

As your baby develops, both the number and type of movements will change with your baby's activity pattern. Usually, afternoon and evening periods are times of peak activity for your baby. During both day and night, your baby has sleep periods that mostly last between 20 and 40 minutes, and are rarely longer than 90 minutes. Your baby will usually not move during these sleep periods.

The number of movements tends to increase until 32 weeks of pregnancy and then stay about the same, although the type of movement may change as you get nearer to your due date. Often, if you are busy, you may not notice all of these movements. Importantly, you should continue to feel your baby move right up to the time you go into labour. Your baby should move during labour too.

