

Ready Steady Baby!

A guide to your pregnancy

Booklet 4: Health problems in pregnancy



4

Easy Read

Health problems in pregnancy

Useful contacts



Use this space to write down useful phone numbers and names, like your midwife and GP.



Name



Telephone



If your midwife or GP are not available, phone 111 for urgent care and advice.



You can find more useful contacts in the Welcome booklet.

Contents

Health problems in pregnancy	Page 2
Common problems in pregnancy	Page 5
Health conditions you already have	Page 16
Other problems in pregnancy	Page 20
Ectopic pregnancy	Page 26
Miscarriage	Page 28



These easy read booklets might still have some difficult words in them. You might need to ask someone to help you read this booklet.

Health problems in pregnancy



Most women have a healthy pregnancy.

Many women have some small health problems that are common and easy to manage. Some women have more serious problems.



Your health and care team will look after you and make sure you and your baby get the support you need.

When to get help



Phone your local maternity unit or NHS 24 on 111 straight away if you feel very unwell or you:



- have bleeding from your vagina

- have watery, clear or coloured liquid coming from your vagina



- have sight problems such as blurry sight or seeing flashing lights



- have a very sore head



- have very swollen hands, ankles and face, and you are feeling sick or being sick

Health problems in pregnancy



- have constant pain in the top of your tummy



- have chest pain or breathing problems



- have felt changes in your baby's movements.



Warning

These could be signs of serious health problems for you or your baby.



Phone your local maternity unit or NHS 24 on 111 if you have any of these symptoms or feel very unwell.

Common problems in pregnancy

If you are having a healthy pregnancy you might still have issues.



You might be able to manage these on your own.

You might need help from your midwife, GP or pharmacist. Everyone's pregnancy is different.



Sore back

As your baby grows you might get a sore back. If you have a sore back:



- do some gentle exercises
- wear flat shoes

Health problems in pregnancy



- try sitting and standing with your back straight and shoulders relaxed



- bend your knees when lifting lighter things. Ask someone else to lift heavy things.

Feeling sick



Most women feel sick or are sick when they are pregnant. This is called morning sickness, but can happen at any time of the day or night.



This usually starts between the 4th and 17th week of your pregnancy.

It usually stops half way through your pregnancy.



Make sure you drink lots of water.

Health problems in pregnancy



Your midwife can help if you are having problems with feeling sick.

Some women are very sick in pregnancy and need help from a specialist doctor.

Cystitis



Cystitis is an infection in your bladder. It can give you a burning feeling when you pee.

It can make you feel you need to pee all the time.



Go to your GP if you have these problems. Your GP might give you some medicine to take.

Health problems in pregnancy

Constipation



Constipation is when you find it difficult to poo. Your poo might be hard and lumpy. It might be painful to poo.

You can help by:



- eating food with lots of fibre, such as vegetables, fruit, beans and wholemeal bread



- drinking at least 2 litres of water a day



- being active.



Speak to your midwife, GP or pharmacist if these things are not helping.

Piles



Piles are swellings inside or around your bottom. They can give you an itching and burning feeling.

They can make you bleed when you have a poo.

It is common to have piles in the last months of pregnancy.



There are medicines that can help. Ask your midwife, GP or pharmacist for advice.



Varicose veins

Varicose veins are large veins under the skin that stick out. They can be painful and itchy.

Varicose veins are usually in your legs. You can get them in your vagina too.

Health problems in pregnancy



If you have varicose veins, try to rest with your legs up when you can. Do not stand up for a long time.



Your midwife can give you some exercises to help.



Tell your midwife or GP if you have any hot, red or painful areas on your legs or the opening of your vagina.

Heartburn



Heartburn is a burning feeling at the top of your chest. It is more common to get heartburn later in pregnancy.

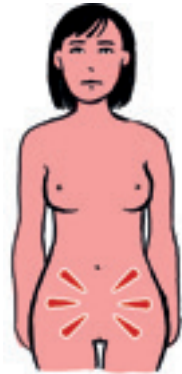


Try to eat small meals more often. Eat slowly.

Heartburn can be made worse by drinking strong tea or coffee, or fruit juice.

It can be made worse by eating spicy or fatty foods.

Pain in your pelvis



Your pelvis is the lower part of your belly, below your belly button and between your hips.

You can get pain in your pelvis when the muscles at the front of your pelvis stretch.



Ask your midwife for advice if you have pain in your pelvis.

Swelling



Some swelling when you are pregnant is normal.



You might need a larger shoe size if your feet swell.

Swelling in your ankles can get worse as the day goes on. Rest with your feet up.



If you have very swollen ankles, fingers or hands or a swollen face contact your midwife or GP straight away.

Health problems in pregnancy

Anaemia



Anaemia is when you do not have enough red blood cells in your body. This makes you feel tired and weak.

A blood test can show if you have anaemia.



Your midwife will tell you about foods to eat and vitamins to take.

Being overweight



If you are overweight you are more likely to have problems during pregnancy and birth.

Women who are overweight are likely to need more help during birth.



You should not try to lose weight during pregnancy.



Speak to your midwife if you would like advice about your weight.

Health conditions you already have



If you already have a health condition, you will see an expert doctor while you are pregnant. You might have extra appointments and scans.

Epilepsy



Most women with epilepsy have a normal pregnancy and a healthy baby.



Some medicines for epilepsy are not safe in pregnancy. Your midwife and GP will give you advice and support.

Diabetes



If you have diabetes, your midwife will look after you and measure your blood sugar levels.

This is important in the early weeks of pregnancy.

High sugar levels can cause problems with your baby's growth.

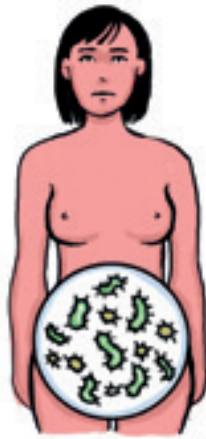


If you have diabetes your baby might need to be born by Caesarean section. This is sometimes called a C-section.

A C-section is when a doctor makes a cut across your stomach and lifts your baby out.

Health problems in pregnancy

Group B strep



Group B strep is a germ that can live inside your bowel and vagina. It is usually harmless.

Most women who have group B strep give birth to a healthy baby.



There is a small chance that group B strep could pass to your baby when they are born. This can make a small number of babies very unwell.



Your midwife can give you more information about group B strep and if you might be at risk.

Mental health



Tell your midwife or GP if you have a mental health condition.

They will check how you are doing and make sure you get the right support.



Do not stop taking any medicine you take for your mental health. Your midwife and GP will give you advice.

Other problems in pregnancy

There are some more serious problems that you can get in pregnancy.



If you have these problems, you might get care from a specialist doctor.

You might have extra appointments and scans.

Bleeding from your vagina



Bleeding from your vagina is not always serious. If you have bleeding, phone your local maternity unit or NHS 24 on 111 straight away.

Gestational diabetes



Gestational diabetes is when the sugar levels in your blood are high. It starts in pregnancy. Usually it goes away after your baby is born.

Some women who have gestational diabetes get diabetes in later life. You will be cared for by specialist doctors.

High blood pressure



Your midwife will check your blood pressure when you are pregnant. It is important to go to all your midwife appointments.

High blood pressure can sometimes cause serious problems for you and your baby.



You might have to take tablets to lower your blood pressure.

Deep vein thrombosis



Deep vein thrombosis is a blood clot in your leg or pelvis. It is more likely during pregnancy and just after giving birth.

It causes pain and red skin that is warm to touch.



If you are worried, talk to your midwife or GP. If you are at risk of deep vein thrombosis you might get medicine to help.

Itching



Many women have some itching in pregnancy. Usually, it feels just a bit itchy.

Sometimes it can be a sign of something more serious.



Always tell your midwife or GP if you have itching.

Rashes



Tell your midwife or GP if you get a rash.

Tell your midwife or GP if you have been in contact with someone who has a rash.

Stay away from other pregnant women until you have been checked.

Pre-eclampsia



Pre-eclampsia is a problem that can only happen when you are pregnant.

It is more likely in your first pregnancy. Most of the time it is mild but it can be dangerous.

Health problems in pregnancy



The signs of pre-eclampsia are that your blood pressure goes up and your baby is not growing well.

You might also have:



- very swollen ankles, fingers, hands or face



- headaches

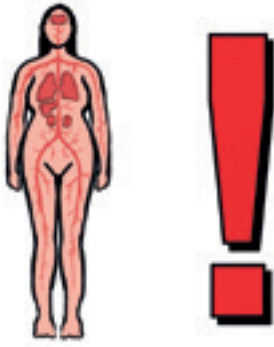


- blurred vision or see flashing lights and changes to your vision



- strong pain just below your ribs.

Health problems in pregnancy



Pre-eclampsia can cause problems with your liver, lungs, kidneys, brain and blood clotting.

If you have pre-eclampsia you might need to give birth to your baby early.



Seizures or fits can happen if pre-eclampsia is not treated or if it is treated too late. This is called eclampsia.

Ectopic pregnancy



6 weeks

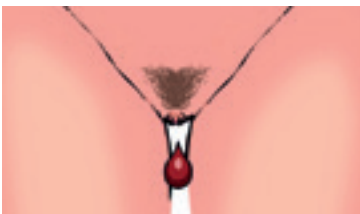
An ectopic pregnancy is when a fertilised egg grows outside the womb. The egg will not grow into a baby.

It is a risk for your health. It can be very serious if it is not treated.

Symptoms usually start when you are around 6 weeks pregnant. They can include:



- pain low down on one side of your tummy



- bleeding from your vagina

Health problems in pregnancy



- pain in your shoulder



- pain when peeing or pooing



- a brown watery liquid from your vagina



- pale skin and sweating.



It is important to get medical help quickly if you have these symptoms.

Miscarriage



A miscarriage is the loss of your baby before 24 weeks.

Most of the time there is no clear reason why it happens. It is unlikely to be caused by anything you did or did not do.

Get help if:



- you are bleeding or have watery liquid from your vagina



- you have strong, cramping pain



- your baby's movements have changed.

Phone your midwife, maternity unit or GP straight away. Or phone NHS 24 on 111.

Early miscarriage



first 12 weeks

Most miscarriages happen before you are 12 weeks pregnant. This is called an early miscarriage.



You might be asked to go into hospital if you are having an early miscarriage.

You will have tests and a scan.

You might give birth to a very small baby.

That can be a shock and it can be upsetting.

Health problems in pregnancy

Late miscarriage



A late miscarriage happens after 12 weeks and before 24 weeks. The loss of a baby at any time is a terrible shock.

A late miscarriage can be very hard to cope with.

You might be having a late miscarriage if:



- you are bleeding from your vagina.
This can be heavy and you might have blood clots



- you have strong, cramping pains.



Phone your midwife, maternity unit or GP.
Or phone NHS 24 on 111.

Health problems in pregnancy



You might need to make difficult decisions if you are having a miscarriage.

Your doctor or midwife will talk to you about what will happen. They will help you decide what to do.



There are organisations that can support you and your family.



After a miscarriage you might be asked if you would like to see or hold your baby.

This is your choice. It can be very hard. Whatever you decide is okay.



You will probably have some bleeding for 1 or 2 weeks. Some women might need medicine or a small operation.

Health problems in pregnancy



You can take someone with you if you are worried. Having support is really important.



You might be offered tests to find out why you had a miscarriage. Most of the time we do not know what causes a miscarriage.



Many women take time off work after a miscarriage.



You are allowed to take sick leave or get sick pay if you have a miscarriage.



You are allowed to take maternity leave and get maternity pay if your baby dies after the 24th week of pregnancy.

Health problems in pregnancy



Speak to your employer about what is right for you and your family.



Most women go on to have a healthy pregnancy after they have had a miscarriage.



Some women have more miscarriages



Most of the time we do not know what causes a miscarriage. You might not be able to stop it from happening.

Health problems in pregnancy

Try to be as healthy as you can if you are planning another pregnancy:



- eat a healthy diet before and during your pregnancy



- take folic acid. This is a vitamin that is important when you are pregnant



- stay a healthy weight



- stop smoking



- stop drinking alcohol



- stop using any drugs that are not prescribed to you by a doctor.



Make sure any medical problems are checked.

Thanks



Thanks to People First (Scotland) and Fair for helping us to make this booklet.



Thanks to all the other parents, professionals and organisations who have helped us.



For more easy read health information go to www.nhsinform.scot/translations/formats/easy-read



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