Pregnancy - Decreased Fetal Movement
Adult Office-Hours Version

DEFINITION

• Concerns that the baby is moving less
• Questions relating to fetal movement
• Questions about how to perform a kick count

Note:

• Pregnant and patient is not in labor

TRIAGE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Call EMS 911 Now
Sounds like a life-threatening emergency to the triager

See More Appropriate Protocol

Pregnant > 36 weeks (i.e., term) and having contractions or other symptoms of labor
Go to Protocol: Pregnancy - Labor (Adult)

Pregnant < 37 weeks (i.e., preterm) and having contractions or other symptoms of labor
Go to Protocol: Pregnancy - Labor - Preterm (Adult)

Pregnant > 20 weeks and having abdominal pain
Go to Protocol: Pregnancy - Abdominal Pain Greater Than 20 Weeks EGA (Adult)

Pregnant > 20 weeks and having vaginal bleeding or spotting
Go to Protocol: Pregnancy - Abdominal Pain Greater Than 20 Weeks EGA (Adult)

Go to L&D Now

Blurred vision or visual change
R/O: preeclampsia

SEVERE headache and not relieved with acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol)
R/O: preeclampsia

Leakage of fluid from vagina
R/O: rupture of membranes

Go to L&D Now (or to Office with PCP Approval)

Pregnant 23 or more weeks and baby moving less today by kick count (e.g., kick count < 5 in 1 hour or < 10 in 2 hours)
Reason: needs exam and fetal monitoring

Pregnant 23 or more weeks and baby moving less today AND unable (or unwilling) to perform kick count
Reason: needs exam and fetal monitoring
Pregnant 23 or more weeks with normal kick count BUT mother still thinks there is something wrong
*Reason: needs exam and fetal monitoring*

Pregnant 23 or more weeks with no movement of baby for 8 hours
*Reason: needs exam and fetal monitoring*

Fever > 100.4° F (38.0° C)
*R/O: chorioamnionitis, pyelonephritis, viral illness*

New hand or face swelling
*R/O: preeclampsia*

Patient sounds very sick or weak to the triager
*Reason: severe acute illness or serious complication suspected*

### See Today in Office

Pregnant 20-22 weeks and no movement of baby > 24 hours
*Reason: needs exam and fetal monitoring*

Discomfort when passing urine (e.g., pain, burning or stinging)
*R/O: UTI, cystitis*

Patient wants to be seen

### See Within 3 Days in Office

Pregnant 20 or more weeks and has not felt baby move yet
*Reason: needs exam to determine EGA*

### Home Care

Baby moving normally OR normal kick count

Pregnant 23 or more weeks and baby moving less today AND willing to perform kick count

Pregnant < 20 weeks and has not felt baby move yet
*Reason: too early in pregnancy, incorrect EGA*

### HOME CARE ADVICE

1. **Quickening:**
   - Quickening is the term used to describe when a woman first feels baby movement.
   - This usually occurs between the 18th-20th weeks of pregnancy.
   - Thin women feel movements earlier in pregnancy than overweight women.
   - Women use many different terms to describe their babies' movements. Early in pregnancy women may describe a “fluttering”, a “nudge”, a “butterfly”, or a slight “twitch”.

2. **Fetal Movement and Pregnancy Dates:**
   - 1-15 Weeks: Baby is too small for for mother to feel the baby move.
   - 16-18 Weeks: Some women begin to feel the baby move, especially if they had a baby before.
   - 18-20 Weeks: Most women begin to feel baby move around this time.
   - 24 Weeks: All women should feel the baby move by this time.
   - Over 28 Weeks: Some doctors advise that women check kick counts each day.
3. **Kick Count Instructions:**
   - Pick the time of the day that the baby is most active.
   - Sit back in a comfortable chair or lay down on your side (preferably left) in bed, in a quiet room with no distractions (e.g., radio, TV, cell phone, computer, children).
   - Count any baby movements (even small ones). Count up to 10.
   - **Normal kick count:** 5 or more in one hour or 10 or more in 2 hours.
   - **Low kick count:** Less than 5 in one hour or less than 10 in 2 hours.

4. **Call Back If:**
   - Low kick count (less than 5 in 1 hour or less than 10 in 2 hours).
   - Normal kick count but you still are worried that something is wrong.
   - You have other questions or concerns.

**FIRST AID**

N/A

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Key Points

- **Quickening** is the term used to describe when a woman first feels baby movement. This usually occurs between the 18th-20th weeks of pregnancy. Women who have been pregnant previously can sometimes feel the baby move as early as the 16th or 17th week. Thin women feel movements earlier in pregnancy than overweight women.
- Women use many different terms to describe their babies' movements. Early in pregnancy women may describe a "fluttering", a "nudge", a "butterfly", or a slight "twitch". Later in pregnancy the baby is larger and the movements are more forceful. Women may then describe "hard kicking", "punching", or "rolling".
- Feeling the baby move is a great source of happiness for the mother to be. The fetal movements provide ongoing reassurance that all is going well with the pregnancy. A decrease or absence of fetal movement can cause significant maternal anxiety regarding the well-being of her baby, and may be a sign of fetal compromise.

**Fetal Movement Dates**

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**Performing Kick Counts**

- Performing a daily "kick count" or using a "kick chart" is one way to track your baby's movement.
- Some doctors recommend kick counts and some doctors do not.
- In some cases (such as a high risk pregnancy), it may be more important to perform daily kick counts.
- Research has shown that performing kick counts does not reduce stillbirths [Grant reference].

**Kick Count Instructions**

- Pick the time of the day that your baby is most active.
- Sit back in a comfortable chair or lay down on your left side in bed.
- Do this in a quiet room (no TV, cell phone, computer, or children).
• Count any baby movement (kicks, rolls, flutters). Count up to 10.
• **Normal Kick Count:** 5 or more in one hour or 10 or more in 2 hours.
• **Low Kick Count:** Less than 5 in one hour or less than 10 in 2 hours.

**Calculating the Estimated Date of Delivery (EDD)**

• EDB (estimated date of birth) and EDC (estimated date of confinement) mean the same thing as EDD.
• LNMP is the last normal menstrual period.
• *Nagele's rule:* EDD = (LNMP - 3 months) + 7 days.

**Calculating the Estimated Gestational Age (EGA)**

• Gestational age is the number of weeks since the LNMP.
• A normal full-term pregnancy lasts 37-42 weeks.
• **Wheel:** Generally, the wheel is the best method for the triager to calculate the gestational age. The patient must be able to give you a relatively accurate LNMP. A wheel and a calculator are available on the internet at www.medcalc.com.
• **Ultrasound:** An ultrasound during early pregnancy can be very accurate in setting the EDD, if patient has had one performed and can remember the results.
• **Fundal height:** The top of the uterus can be palpated at the level of the navel at 20 weeks of gestational age.
• **Fetal Heart Tones:** Can be first heard with a doppler stethoscope at 10-12 weeks gestational age.

**REFERENCES**


