

Fetal Movement Counting

When should I start to feel my baby move?

You probably won't feel your baby kick until sometime between 16 and 22 weeks, even though he started moving at 7 or 8 weeks and you may have already witnessed his acrobatics if you've had an ultrasound. If the placenta is in the front (anterior) women can often perceive fewer movements or start feeling them later in this range.

Veteran moms tend to notice those first subtle kicks — also known as "quickening" — earlier than first-time moms. (A woman who's been pregnant before can more easily distinguish her baby's kick from other belly rumblings, such as gas). Thinner women tend to feel movement earlier and more often than women who carry more weight.

What does it feel like?

Women have described it like a fluttering sensation, a goldfish swimming around, or butterflies fluttering. At first you might think that the movements are "gas" or digestive movements but once you start feeling them more regularly, you'll recognize the difference. You are more likely to feel these early movements when you're sitting or lying quietly.

How often should I feel movements?

At first the kicks you notice will be few and far between. In fact, you may feel several movements one day and then none the next. Although your baby is moving and kicking regularly, many of her movements aren't yet strong enough for you to feel. But later in the second trimester, those reassuring kicks will become stronger and more regular.

If you're tempted to compare notes with other pregnant women, don't worry if your experience differs from that of your friends. Every baby has his own pattern of activity, and there's no correct one. As long as your baby's usual activity level doesn't change too much, chances are she's doing just fine.

What if I am feeling fewer movements than usual?

Your baby could simply be having a "quiet" day, sleeping more or have changed positions; however, you should not ignore a lack of movement. Counting your baby's movements is a simple way for you to play an important role in checking the health of your baby. An active baby is usually a healthy baby. If you are concerned about your baby's number of movements, for example; not feeling any movements or perceiving decreased movements and you are at least 28 weeks pregnant (in your 3rd trimester) we recommend checking in with your baby by doing fetal movement counting.

How do I count fetal movements?

Take some time out of your busy day and check in with your baby. Do this by lying or sitting down and concentrating on your baby's movements--after a meal or a snack is often a good time. If you feel less than 6 distinct movements in a 2 hour period, stop counting and page your midwife. When you contact your midwife she will discuss the results of the counting with you and may arrange a test in the hospital (Non Stress Test) to assess your baby's well being.

If you have a higher than normal risk pregnancy your midwife may ask you to do daily fetal movement counting from 26-32 weeks onward.