

Guidelines for Kick Counting and Contraction Monitoring

If you're like most pregnant women, you probably worry a little about your pregnancy and your baby's health. You can help the obstetrics team at The Woman's Health Pavilion stay informed about the status of your pregnancy by performing kick counting and contraction monitoring.

Kick Counting

Since healthy babies, as a rule, tend to be active in the third trimester of pregnancy, you can keep us informed about the status of your baby by "counting kicks." This is done by counting the number of times your baby moves over the course of an hour.

When is the best time of day to count kicks?

Counting your baby's movements is best done in the morning, in a quiet room, with no distractions (like TV or children).

How is kick counting done?

With your hands on your belly, count all of your baby's movements in one hour. If your baby does not move at least 6 times during the hour, try drinking a glass of juice and re-monitoring. If your baby is still not active, give us a call.

If I don't feel my baby move, does it mean something is wrong?

Most women who report decreased movement nonetheless have healthy babies. We can check on your baby in the office by monitoring the baby's heart rate with a fetal monitor or by checking the baby with a sonogram. Don't be alarmed if your baby is inactive for a couple of hours. After all, babies in the womb sleep too.

Do all pregnant women need to count kicks?

Healthy women with uncomplicated pregnancies do not need to routinely monitor their baby's movements. You should, however, be generally aware of your baby's activity level. If your baby seems inactive, you should count kicks as described above.

What conditions make it necessary to count kicks?

Women with certain conditions should perform kick counting daily after 28 weeks of pregnancy. This includes those who have:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Had a poor outcome in a prior pregnancy

Also, daily kick counting is worthwhile if you are one week past your due date.

Tracking Uterine Contractions

In addition to counting kicks, it is sometimes helpful to keep track of your uterine contractions. Most women will normally feel contractions occasionally throughout the last 3 months of pregnancy. These Braxton-Hicks contractions occur less than 4 times an hour and may be uncomfortable but are generally not painful.

When should I track my uterine contractions?

You should monitor yourself, if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Contractions more than 4 times an hour
- Painful contractions

How do I monitor my uterine contractions?

To monitor your contractions, you should be off your feet in a quiet room. With your hands on your belly, count the number of contractions that occur over an hour. Contractions feel like menstrual cramps, often with lower pelvic pressure or intermittent back pain.

What can I do to control the contractions?

If you seem to be having a lot of contractions, staying off your feet can help. Also, drink plenty of fluids to keep from becoming dehydrated. If contractions continue to be painful or frequent, you should let us know immediately.

As is the case with kick counting, you should be generally aware of your contractions.

When is it necessary to monitor uterine contractions regularly?

In the following cases, you will need to monitor your uterine contractions regularly:

- You have previously given birth to infants earlier than 8 months (36 weeks) of pregnancy
- You are carrying twins
- Your cervix is dilated at less than 36 weeks (we may ask you to monitor regularly)

We Are Here for You & Your Baby

By following these guidelines, you can help us help you.