

High Blood Pressure and Preeclampsia During and After Pregnancy

What is high blood pressure?

Blood pressure is the pressure of the blood against the blood vessel walls each time the heart contracts (squeezes) to pump the blood through your body. High blood pressure is also called ***hypertension***.

What is preeclampsia?

Preeclampsia is a serious disorder that develops during pregnancy or up to 6 weeks after delivery. It can affect many organs (brain, kidneys, and/or liver) in your body. Preeclampsia usually happens in the last half of pregnancy.

Preeclampsia can cause:

- High Blood Pressure
- Protein in the urine
- Organ Damage
- Seizure
- Stroke
- Death

What are the symptoms of preeclampsia?

Some women may have many symptoms of preeclampsia while others may only have one or two.

- Swelling of face or hands
- A headache that is severe or will not go away
- Seeing spots or changes in vision
- Pain in the upper right area of your belly
- Nausea or throwing up
- Sudden or rapid weight gain
- Trouble breathing or feeling short of breath
- Heartburn that will not go away
- Decreased urination or none
- High blood pressure
- Chest pain
- Confusion

When does preeclampsia occur?

Preeclampsia can occur anytime during pregnancy, but most often after 20 weeks. It also can occur in the six weeks after your pregnancy.

What are the risk factors for preeclampsia?

- First pregnancy
- A history of preeclampsia in a previous pregnancy
- Family history of preeclampsia
- History of high blood pressure
- History of kidney disease
- Age 35 years or older
- Carrying more than one baby
- Certain medical conditions such as diabetes, bleeding disorders, or certain auto-immune conditions
- BMI over 35
- Fertility treatment

What are the risks for my baby if preeclampsia occurs?

- Premature delivery
- Stillbirth

What are the long-term risks for me if preeclampsia occurs?

- Preeclampsia can cause serious health problems for you and could have lifelong impacts.
- Women who have had preeclampsia have increased risk of:
 - Heart disease, heart attack, and stroke
 - High blood pressure

If you have had preeclampsia once, it increases your risk of preeclampsia with future pregnancies.

What should you do if you have been diagnosed with preeclampsia or postpartum preeclampsia?

- Keep your follow-up appointments with your healthcare provider, even if you are feeling well.
- Expect your first follow-up appointment after delivery to be within 2-5 days of discharge from the hospital.
- Continue your prescribed medications as directed.

Your provider will be following your health closely during your pregnancy and for 6 weeks after your baby is born.

If you notice any of the symptoms of preeclampsia listed above, seek medical attention. Get a ride to your closest emergency room or call 911 and report the symptoms you have been experiencing.

** It is important to let healthcare providers know if you are pregnant or have recently been pregnant.*

If you have been given a blue wrist band to wear, the band is to alert healthcare workers and others of your condition. Wear this band during your pregnancy and continue to wear it after you deliver. Leave the blue wristband on until your healthcare provider takes it off or tells you to take it off.

Many complications of preeclampsia can be prevented. Your healthcare provider is working to raise awareness of preeclampsia in our communities by using the blue medical alert bands and education.

