

Danger Signs in Pregnancy

What are the danger signs in pregnancy?

Most women go through pregnancy with some uncomfortable symptoms but no serious problems. Normal discomforts of pregnancy can include nausea (especially in the first 3 months), heartburn, a need to urinate often, backache, breast tenderness and swelling, and tiredness.

There are some symptoms that may mean danger for you or the baby. Being aware of these danger signs can help you know when you may need special care from your healthcare provider.

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following symptoms **before the 37th week of pregnancy**:

- Pain, pressure, or cramping in your belly
- Contractions that happen more than 4 times an hour or are less than 15 minutes apart
- Leaking of fluid from the vagina

Also call your provider right away if you have:

- Vaginal bleeding
- A lot of nausea and vomiting
- A temperature over 100°F (37.8°C)
- Very bad headache or a headache that lasts for several days
- New problems with your vision
- Less movement and kicking by the baby
- Sudden weight gain (3 to 5 pounds within 5 to 7 days) with a lot of swelling of your feet, ankles, face, or hands
- Seizures

You should also call your provider if you have:

- Blood in your urine or burning and pain when you urinate
- Diarrhea that doesn't go away
- Vaginal discharge with a bad odor, irritation, or itching

What problems might cause these danger signs?

A number of different problems may cause these danger signs. Some of the more common problems are described below.

Miscarriage

Cramping, contractions, and bleeding during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy can be a sign of a miscarriage and possible loss of your baby. Other signs include bleeding or a gush of fluid from your vagina. Sometimes a miscarriage can be avoided with bed rest. If you do lose the baby, then you need to see your

healthcare provider to make sure that no tissue from your pregnancy is left in your uterus. Tissue left in your uterus could cause an infection.

Tubal pregnancy

Pain or pressure in your lower belly during the first 3 months of pregnancy could mean that the fertilized egg is outside your uterus. This is called a tubal, or ectopic, pregnancy. The pain may be worse on one side of your belly or you may feel pain in your shoulder. You may also feel dizzy or faint, or have nausea or vomiting. A baby cannot survive in an ectopic pregnancy. Because an ectopic pregnancy can cause severe internal bleeding and threatens the life of the mother, it must be ended. If it is diagnosed very early in pregnancy, the pregnancy may be ended with medicine. Otherwise, surgery must be done to remove the pregnancy.

Severe morning sickness

If you have severe nausea and vomiting that doesn't stop in the first 3 months of pregnancy, you could lose weight and lose too much fluid from your body. You and the baby may not get enough nutrients. Your body's chemicals may get off balance. You may need to be treated in the hospital. Morning sickness usually gets better after the first 3 months of pregnancy.

Preterm labor

Labor that starts between weeks 20 and 37 of a pregnancy is called preterm labor. The signs of preterm labor may include:

- Cramps that come and go
- Pelvic pressure
- Low, dull backache
- More vaginal discharge or a change in its color

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions if you think you are having labor contractions.

Infection

A temperature that is over 100°F (37.8°C) could be a sign of infection or illness. A high temperature or infection can lead to preterm labor. The infection may need to be treated with antibiotics or other medicines.

Problems with the baby

Babies start to move early in pregnancy. Most women start to feel the movements at about 20 weeks, or halfway through the pregnancy. Each baby has its own pattern of movement. Be aware of the pattern of your baby's movements. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for keeping track of your baby's movements and know when to tell your provider about possible problems.

High blood pressure and preeclampsia

It's important to see your healthcare provider regularly to have your blood pressure checked. If you have high blood pressure along with other symptoms, it's called preeclampsia. Symptoms of preeclampsia include:

- Headaches
- Swelling of your feet, ankles, face, or hands
- Pain in your upper belly
- Blurred vision

If preeclampsia is not treated or gets severe, it can cause brain, liver, kidney, heart, or eye damage. Sometimes it causes seizures.

Delivery of the baby may be the best treatment for preeclampsia. If your baby has not developed enough, you may need bed rest at home or in the hospital until your blood pressure goes down or the baby is ready for delivery.

Problems with the placenta

The placenta is tissue inside the uterus that is attached to the baby by the umbilical cord. It carries oxygen and food from your blood to the baby's blood. Vaginal bleeding during the second half of pregnancy, with or without pain, may be a sign of problems with the placenta. For example, the placenta may cover the cervix, or it may separate from the wall of the uterus. Vaginal bleeding from a problem with the placenta may be treated with bed rest at home or in the hospital. In severe cases, the baby may need to be delivered right away.

Remember, if you are pregnant and have any of these danger signs, call your healthcare provider right away.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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