

Danger Signs in Pregnancy

What are the danger signs in pregnancy?

Most women go through pregnancy without serious problems. Normal discomforts of pregnancy can include heartburn, a need to urinate often, backache, breast tenderness and swelling, and feeling tired. But there are some symptoms that may mean danger for you or the baby. It is very important for you to know these danger signs, so you can get help when you need it.

If you have any of the following symptoms before the 37th week of pregnancy, contact your healthcare provider right away:

- Pain, pressure, or cramping in your abdomen
- Contractions between weeks 20 and 37 that occur more than 4 times an hour or are less than 15 minutes apart
- Leaking of fluid from the vagina pregnancy

Also call your provider right away if you have:

- Bleeding as heavy as a period
- Very severe nausea and vomiting
- Fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher
- Severe headache
- New problems with you vision
- Less movement and kicking by the baby
- Sudden weight gain with sever swelling of the feet, ankles, face, or hands

You should also call your provider if you have:

- Blood in your urine or burning, painful urination
- Diarrhea that does not go away
- Vaginal discharge with a bad odor

What problems might cause these symptoms?

Possible causes of these problems are:

- Ectopic pregnancy
- Miscarriage
- Hyperemesis gravidarum
- Preterm labor
- Infection in pregnancy
- Fetal distress
- Preeclampsia
- Toxemia
- Placenta previa
- Placental abruption

- Bladder infection
- Vaginal infection
- Rupture of membranes (water breaking)
- Intestinal infection

Ectopic pregnancy

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

Miscarriage

Cramping and bleeding during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy can be a sign of a miscarriage and possible loss of the baby. Other signs include bleeding or a gush of fluid from the vagina. Sometimes a miscarriage can be stopped with bed rest. If you do lose the baby, you need to see your provider to make sure that all of the contents of the uterus are removed.

Hyperemesis gravidarum

Extremely severe, ongoing nausea and vomiting is called hyperemesis gravidarum. It causes weight loss and the loss of fluid from the body (dehydration). When this happens, you and the baby may not get enough needed nutrients and it can lead to other serious problems for you and the baby. It may require:

- Staying in the hospital
- Intravenous (IV) fluids
- Not eating or drinking for a short time, to rest your stomach, then slowly starting to eat foods.

Preterm Labor

Labor that begins between weeks 20 and 37 of a pregnancy is called preterm labor. The signs of preterm labor are:

- Contractions, either painful or painless, that occur more than 4 times an hour, or are less than 15 minutes apart
- Pelvic pressure
- Low, dull backache
- Increase in or change in color in vaginal discharge
- Abdominal or menstrual-like cramps that may come and go.

You may be able to stop the contractions by drinking 2 or 3 glasses of water or juice and lying down with your feet elevated. If the symptoms do not go away in 1 hour, contact your provider. Your provider may give you medicine to stop the contractions.

Infection

Fever, especially if it is over 100.5°F(38.1°C) or lasts 3 days or longer could be a sign of infection or illness. This can also trigger preterm labor. The infection may need to be treated with antibiotics or other medicines.

Fetal Distress

If the baby stops moving around and kicking, it could mean that the baby is having problems. Count the number of times your baby moves in 1 hour, or how long it takes for you to feel your baby move 10 times. If after 26 weeks of pregnancy, you count fewer than 10 kicks in a day, or if the baby is moving a lot less than usual, tell your provider right away. You may need tests to see if the baby is in distress. If a test suggests a problem, this does not always mean the baby is in trouble. It may only mean that you need special care until the baby is delivered.

Preeclampsia or Toxemia

High blood pressure with severe headaches; swelling of the feet, ankles, face, or hands; and blurred vision are some of the signs of preeclampsia or toxemia. It usually happens after about 30 weeks of pregnancy. Delivery of the baby is the best treatment. If the condition is mild and you are close to your due date, your provider will probably induce labor. If the baby has not developed enough, you may need bed rest at home or in the hospital until your blood pressure goes down or you and the baby are ready for delivery. You will have close monitoring by your provider until the baby is born.

Placenta previa

Heavy, bright red, painless bleeding from the vagina that begins suddenly in the last few months of pregnancy is a sign of placenta previa. This happens when the placenta covers part or all of the cervix. It can cause severe bleeding and can be very serious for the mother and baby. If the bleeding is heavy, you will need to stay in the hospital until you and the baby are stable. If the bleeding stops or is light, you will need continued bed rest until the baby is ready for delivery. If the bleeding does not stop or if preterm labor starts, the baby will be delivered by C-section.

Placental abruption

Vaginal bleeding during the second half of pregnancy, sudden continuous or cramping pain in your abdomen or tenderness when it is pressed can be signs of placental abruption. This means the placenta is breaking away from the wall of the uterus and the baby may not be getting enough oxygen. If the separation is minor, resting in bed for a few days usually stops the bleeding. Moderate cases may require complete bed rest. Severe cases may require immediate delivery of the baby.

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