Fetal Movement during Pregnancy

Your baby’s activity level – the kicks, rolls, and wiggles you can feel – will vary throughout your pregnancy. Every baby is different when it comes to fetal movement, and there’s a wide range of what is normal.

**Fetal movement in the first trimester**

Although the first trimester is a time of fast development, you should not expect to feel any fetal movement yet. Your baby is too tiny and heavily protected by the cushioned environment of your womb.

**Fetal movement in the second trimester**

Some pregnant women (the very thin or those who have had a previous child) first feel their baby’s movement as early as 16 weeks. Most women do not recognize or are unaware of the twitches and flits that can feel a lot like gas for at least another month. By 20 weeks, most women are feeling some fidgets and squirms of their active baby. The baby’s routines will become increasingly more acrobatic as his/her motor skills develop. Once you feel large hits and kicks, don’t panic if you go several hours- or even a day or two- without noticing any movement. It is still normal not to feel regular, daily movement. Your baby’s movements increase in the 24th week. Because the motion of your movement in your daily routine can lull the baby to sleep, and because you are often focused on other things when you are up and about, you may find the baby is most active when you settle down for the night or after you sit down to dinner or a snack and relax.

**Fetal movement in the third trimester**

Your baby still has enough room to move in the womb in the 28th week, but is a bit more cramped. The punches and hits from your active baby can feel pretty strong now and possibly be quite a jolt to your system. Babies are individuals and like adults have their own personality. Some may be more active than others and have different patterns of movement. Please do not stress over a very active baby; this is healthy and does not mean the baby will be hyperactive as a child. You can also feel rhythmic movements or flutters, such as hiccups, which are normal.

**Counting fetal movements in the 28th week**

Set aside some quiet time to feel fetal activity every day. We do not expect you to count fetal movements every day, but if your baby’s movements seem to have decreased from what you normally feel, have a snack or some fruit juice, lie down, and count the fetal movements. You should be able to count at least ten fetal movements in one hour. These do not have to be hard kicks and hits - they can be shifting movements or flutters too. All movements count! If you still do not feel ten movements within an hour’s time, you should call us at 408-371-7111. If it is after normal business hours, the answering service will pick up and the doctor will call you back.
Counting fetal movements in the 32nd week

Continue paying attention to fetal movements and counting as necessary for a decrease. Be aware that your baby has cycles of sleeping and wakefulness. You should be able to perk up the baby with a snack. This usually rouses the baby and you will feel more fetal movement. If you don’t feel ten movements within an hour’s time, you should call us at 408-371-7111.

As you get closer to your due date, and your baby fills up the available space in the womb, your baby’s movements should definitely get your attention. It is crucial to note changes in activity, count fetal movements and report any sudden decreases to us. After your baby drops into position, you may feel some changes and/or sharp twinges close to your cervix. This is normal.

Please do not hesitate to ask for clarification at your prenatal visits or call us if you are concerned.