

FETAL KICK COUNTS

A healthy baby will roll, turn and kick throughout the pregnancy and even when you are in labor. You should be aware of the times of day your baby is most active. A fetus will have both active and quiet, restful times.

Decreased fetal movement has several causes. Most commonly, the baby is sleeping. However, poor placental function, infection or stress may also result in decreased fetal movements. If you suspect that your baby is not moving well, you should notify our office immediately. Having checked and measured your fetal kick counts, as described below, you can help us determine if there is a need to order additional tests. We may order a special test to examine your baby's health (for example, a non-stress test or a biophysical profile).

After a meal, or after drinking a large glass of juice, lie down on your left side and place your hand on your abdomen. Count over the course of one hour, the number of movements (kicks, turns and rolls) you feel your baby make. A fetus should move at least 10 times in one hour, and usually more. The sugar in the juice or meal should stimulate a sleeping baby to wake up and move.

If your baby moves less than 10 times in the hour, then drink another large glass of juice and count for one more hour. If the baby still does not move 10 times per hour, then notify us at once. If for some reason, you cannot reach one of us, go to the hospital where you are planning to deliver for immediate evaluation in their Labor and Delivery department.

NON-STRESS TESTS AND AMNIOTIC FLUID INDEX

Additional tests your provider might order include a Non-stress Test and an Amniotic Fluid Index. A non-stress test, also known as NST, measures the heart rate of the fetus in response to its own movements. It is common for the fetus's heart to beat faster when the fetus moves.

The NST takes 20-40 minutes and involves the placement of a belt around your abdomen. Transducers are attached to the belt and the fetus's heart rate is measured. You push a button each time you feel the fetus move. This causes a mark to be made on a paper recording. Occasionally the fetus is asleep and the doctor or nurse may try waking the fetus with a buzzer or by having you eat or drink.

Sometimes the result of a NST suggests there is a problem, when in fact the fetus is healthy. If the NST shows no change in the fetal heart rate in response to fetal movement, your provider may want to do another test to confirm that the first test results were correct.

An Amniotic Fluid Index, also known as AFI, measures by ultrasound the amount of amniotic fluid in the sac surrounding the fetus. As the fetus grows larger, the volume of amniotic fluid may begin to decrease. Decreased amounts of amniotic fluid may cause the umbilical cord to become pinched as a result of movements of the fetus or contractions of the mother's uterus.