

What happens after pre-eclampsia

Could it happen again?

After a first pregnancy complicated by pre-eclampsia, your risk of recurrence is about one in 20. This is an average and the individual risk of recurrence may be higher for those who developed pre-eclampsia relatively early in the previous pregnancy and lower for those who developed it at or near term. But if severe pre-eclampsia occurs in a second pregnancy, the risk of recurrence in a third pregnancy will be very high although some women can still have relatively normal pregnancies.

Who will get it again?

It is impossible to predict who will and who will not get pre-eclampsia again. Certain long-term health problems increase the risk of pre-eclampsia, including chronic high blood pressure, kidney disease, and diabetes. The risk also rises in the presence of other predisposing factors such as increasing age, Body Mass Index over 30, multiple pregnancy and more than a 10 year interval since your last baby. You are more likely to get pre-eclampsia again if it started before 37 weeks in your first pregnancy, your pre-eclampsia was severe, or your baby was underweight. If you do get it again, it is likely to start about the same time as in your last pregnancy or a little later.

Can you reduce the risk?

There are no self-help measures that are guaranteed to work. A good balanced diet is important for the success of any pregnancy, but we cannot recommend a specific diet to prevent pre-eclampsia. Some consultants recommend taking small doses of aspirin for those women with a history of early onset of the condition (ie: before 32 weeks). This is not a self-help treatment and should only be used under strict supervision of a hospital consultant.

The most important contribution you can make is to co-operate fully with your antenatal checks, which are designed to protect you and your baby. Take an active interest in the results of your tests and ask for explanations if necessary. Make sure your midwife knows if you had pre-eclampsia in a previous pregnancy - and make sure they know the details. Always tell your doctor straight away about any worrying symptoms and make sure you have your blood pressure and urine checked.

At Action on Pre-Eclampsia we speak to people every day who have been affected by the disease. The charity was set up in order to provide help, support and information for women who have suffered from pre-eclampsia and their families.

The experience of pre-eclampsia can lead to a distressing and anxious time, however the condition has affected you:

- you may be feeling emotionally overwhelmed by your experience;
 - you may have been seriously ill yourself;
 - your baby may have needed special care;
 - you are a partner or relative trying to come to terms with your own feelings;
 - your baby has died
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- Pre-eclampsia is not caused by bad living habits or prevented by good ones. You are not to blame if you have suffered from it. We can provide support to you and your family in a variety of different ways..

Many people experience a range of intense feelings including disbelief, distress, anger, fear, guilt and isolation. It is common to embark on a next pregnancy with many worries.

Expert advice

We have a list of experts on pre-eclampsia who have agreed to offer one off consultations or second opinions to members and inquirers, in most cases subject to the approval of the referring health authorities.

The Helpline

The Action on Pre-eclampsia helpline is a confidential service open to anyone seeking information or support. We receive calls from pregnant women, those who have experienced pre-eclampsia, concerned relatives and health professionals. Alternatively you can write to us or email us and we will answer you personally and in confidence.

For advice or information about any aspect of pre-eclampsia, call the Action on Pre-eclampsia helpline on 0208 427 4217

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