

A basic guide to pre-eclampsia

I feel OK. Why should I see my midwife regularly?

Your midwife will:-

- Help to keep you and your baby safe.
- Get to know you and notice changes that may mean you are at risk of problems such as pre-eclampsia.

What is pre-eclampsia?

- Pre-eclampsia is an illness that happens in pregnancy.
- It is usually mild.
- Sometimes it can be serious.
- It can affect you and your baby.

Pre-eclampsia used to be called toxæmia.

How can it harm me and my baby?

- Pre-eclampsia can make your blood pressure higher than usual and cause other problems.
- Pre-eclampsia can stop your baby getting enough food or oxygen.
- Your baby may grow more slowly and can develop other problems.

Am I likely to get it?

You are more likely to get it if:-

- You are having your very first baby.
- Any close relatives (mother or sister) have had pre-eclampsia.
- You are aged 40 or more.
- You already have high blood pressure.
- You have kidney disease or diabetes.
- You are expecting twins, triplets or more.
- You have had it before.
- You have a BMI of 35 or more.
- It's 10 years or more since your last baby.
- You have medical conditions such as high blood pressure, renal disease, diabetes or antiphospholipid syndrome.

How will I know if I've got it?

Pre-eclampsia occurs in the second half of pregnancy.

Look out for:-

- Bad headaches that don't go away.
- Blurred vision, flashing lights or spots in front of your eyes.
- Bad pain just below your ribs, especially on the right side.

These may be signs of pre-eclampsia.

What can my midwife do to help me?

- Take your blood pressure regularly.
- Test your urine for protein.

Raised blood pressure and protein in your urine can be signs of pre-eclampsia.

What can be done to help me and my baby if I have pre-eclampsia?

- Finding pre-eclampsia early makes it easier to keep you and your baby safe.
- Treatment can be given to help lower your blood pressure.
- You may be asked to stay in hospital, so that doctors and midwives can keep a close watch on the health of you and your baby.
- Your baby may be delivered early.

Pre-eclampsia will not get better until after your baby is born, then you should get better quickly.

If I get pre-eclampsia is it my fault?

- No. There is nothing you can do to prevent it.
- High blood pressure in pre-eclampsia is not caused by worry or stress or by working when you are pregnant.

If you want further information write to:

Action on Pre-Eclampsia
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Harrow, Middlesex HA1 4HZ
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Registered charity no. 1013557
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www.apec.org.uk

Action on Pre-Eclampsia is a national charity which helps and supports women with pre-eclampsia. Action on Pre-Eclampsia run courses for midwives and doctors. Action on Pre-Eclampsia can help by giving you further information, or support on the telephone helpline.

Helpline number 020 8427 4217

Remember

Turn up

- Make friends with you midwife

Find out

- About pre-eclampsia

Stay safe

- Midwife's telephone number:
