

Hypertension in Pregnancy

Women who have high blood pressure (hypertension) before pregnancy or before 20 weeks gestation are at higher risk of problems in pregnancy. Some of these risks include:

- worsening high blood pressure
- preeclampsia (High blood pressure that can happen in pregnancy. This can cause seizures or liver problems.)
- problems with the placenta that may cause poor fetal growth
- preterm delivery
- the placenta separates from the uterus before birth (placental abruption)
- bleeding too much after delivery (hemorrhage)
- stroke
- a higher risk of needing a c-section

Because of these risks, you will have some extra tests and office visits during your pregnancy.

First Trimester and Second Trimester

- You will be taking baby aspirin (two 81 mg tablets) every day beginning at 12 weeks and continuing until delivery.
- You will have:
 - An ultrasound to find out your due date.
 - Extra labs including a 24 hour urine collection to check for protein in your urine.
 - Your urine checked for protein every prenatal visit.
 - An appointment with a doctor for every third prenatal visit (other visits can be with a midwife or nurse practitioner).

Third Trimester

- You will have:
 - Extra ultrasounds to check your baby's growth at 28 weeks and 36 weeks.
 - Extra monitoring for your baby starting at 32 weeks. This will include:
 - **Non-stress tests (NSTs)** – you will be placed on a fetal heart monitor for 15 to 20 minutes. This test will be done once or twice per week.
 - **Biophysical Profile (BPP)** – These ultrasounds may be done once every week to check:
 - How much amniotic fluid you have.
 - Your baby's movement, muscle tone and breathing movements.

Delivery

- If your blood pressure is well-controlled and you are NOT on blood pressure medicine, it is best if your delivery is between 38 weeks and your due date.
- If your blood pressure is well-controlled and you ARE on blood pressure medicine, it is best if your delivery is between 37 weeks and your due date.
- You may need to have your labor induced with medicine.

Call the office or after hours number right away if you have:

- Severe headache.
- Visual changes (seeing spots, flashes, blurring).
- Severe right sided stomach pain.
- Sudden swelling, not just in your legs and feet.

Things that you can do to help keep your blood pressure under control:

Eat a healthy diet. Include mostly fresh foods. Avoid processed or packaged foods. Processed foods tend to contain high levels of added salt, sugar and fat.

- Include these things in your diet every day:
 - LOTS of fresh vegetables (at least 3 servings per day) and fresh fruits (at least 2 servings per day).
 - Healthy carbohydrates - whole grains including whole grain bread, whole grain pasta, brown rice, old fashioned or steel cut oats, beans and lentils.
 - Healthy sources of protein - lean meats, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, beans, lentils. Try to get 60-80 grams of protein in your diet every day.
 - Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water daily.
- Limit these things in your diet:
 - Processed food, salty snacks, packaged baked goods, sugar sweetened drinks.
 - Fried foods

Get regular exercise. Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Five to six days per week is best. Moderate exercise means your heart rate is elevated and you are breathing heavily but can still talk comfortably.

Daily Relaxation - try to spend 5 to 15 minutes per day doing something that helps you to relax. Meditation is great. Other activities such as yoga, coloring and knitting can also help you to relax. Find what works for you.

Get 6 to 8 hours of sleep per night. If you snore, you may have sleep apnea. This can make high blood pressure worse. Let us know. We can make a referral to sleep medicine to have you tested for sleep apnea.

Take your blood pressure medicine every day as prescribed.

Take two baby aspirin (162mg) every day.

Try not to gain too much weight during your pregnancy. Weight gain guidelines are based on your body mass index (BMI) before pregnancy. Gaining too much weight in pregnancy increases the risk of high blood pressure, preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, having a large baby and needing a c-section for delivery.

- **BMI < 18.5** – suggested weight gain is 28 to 40 lbs.
- **BMI 18.5 to 24.9** – suggested weight gain is 25 to 35 lbs.
- **BMI 25 to 29.9** – suggested weight gain is 15 to 25 lbs
- **BMI greater than 30** – suggested weight gain is 11 to 20 lbs