

## Fetal Movement Counting

Fetal movement counting is an accepted, simple method of assessing the wellbeing of your baby. Research has confirmed what women have known for centuries: The activity of your baby is reassuring and a dramatic decrease in your baby's activity level or a cessation of movements is worrisome. [1, 2, 3]. I may ask you to count fetal movements to get a baseline of what is normal for your baby, if we are worried that you are not feeling a "normal" amount of activity, or if you go past your estimated due date.

There are several things that can influence your baby's activity level: The time of day, the gestational age of your baby, glucose levels, sound stimulus, smoking, medications. Babies, especially towards the end of pregnancy, go through sleep-wake cycles too so if you don't feel any movement for 20 or 30 minutes give your baby a little time to wake up. Other factors can influence your perception of movement such as the amount of amniotic fluid and location of the placenta. There is a normal *slight* decrease in movement and amplitude as it gets near your due date.

There are many methods of counting and recording fetal movements but none has been shown to be superior to another. The following method is known as the *Cardiff Count-to-Ten Movement Counting Method*:

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose one period during the day to count. You should choose a time when you know your baby is normally active (in the evening for most babies) and you will be able to focus on the baby.
2. Count at the same time every day.
3. You will chart how long it takes to reach 10 movements.
4. Count all recognizable movements. This may be a kick, a punch, rolling, stretching, etc. If you feel a short flurry of kicks, count that as one movement. Do not count hiccups.
5. Fill in all blanks on the chart.
6. There must be at least 10 movements in 10 hours. (Most women will feel 10 movements in much less time, usually within the first hour.)
7. If you feel less than 10 movements within a 10 hour period, or you notice a pattern of steadily decreasing movements each day you need to let me know.
8. If you feel no movement within an hour after you begin to count go lie down on your left side and really focus on the baby. If you still feel no movement within 90 minutes I want you to contact me.
9. If we feel that there is a reason to be concerned about the activity level of your baby further tests may be needed to assess the wellbeing of your baby.
10. Be sure and bring your chart to your prenatal visits!

1. Neldam, S. Fetal movements as an indicator of fetal wellbeing. *Lancet*. 1:1222-1234, 1980

2. Rayburn, W>F> Fetal body movement monitoring. *Obstet. Gynecol. Clin. N. Amer.* 17 (1):95-110, 1990

3. Sadovsky, E., and Yaffe, H. Daily fetal movement recording and fetal prognosis. *Obstet. Gynecol.* 41:845-850, 1973

