

Amniotic fluid embolism (AFE) is an extremely rare, but life-threatening complication that affects pregnant women shortly before, during, or immediately following labor and childbirth. Most instances occur during labor. In this disorder, it is hypothesized that a pregnant woman has a severe, allergic reaction to amniotic fluid or other fetal material such as fetal cells, which enter the mother's bloodstream. Amniotic fluid is contained within the amniotic sac. This fluid supports, cushions, and protects a developing fetus. Amniotic fluid embolism is unpredictable and no risk factors have been identified. AFE can cause a severe, rapid decline in the mother's health. For years, some researchers believed that the amniotic fluid and fetal cells cause obstruction within the mother's blood vessels, but now most researchers believe that the mother's immune system reacts to the amniotic fluid and fetal cells causing an overwhelming immune system response, which ends up harming the mother and the fetus. Breathing problems, cardiac arrest, and excessive bleeding are some of the life-threatening complications that can occur. Researchers and physicians do not fully understand why amniotic fluid or fetal cells entering the mother's bloodstream causes this reaction in some women. Amniotic fluid embolism is a medical emergency that develops suddenly and rapidly and can be fatal. Early recognition and prompt supportive treatment are essential. Amniotic fluid embolism is a rare complication that occurs just before, during, or immediately after birth. The number of women who have experienced this complication is unknown. Amniotic fluid embolism is a rare disorder. Rare disorders often go unrecognized or misdiagnosed, making it difficult to determine their true frequency in the general population. Estimates have ranged from 1 in 8,000 to 1 in 80,000 pregnancies.