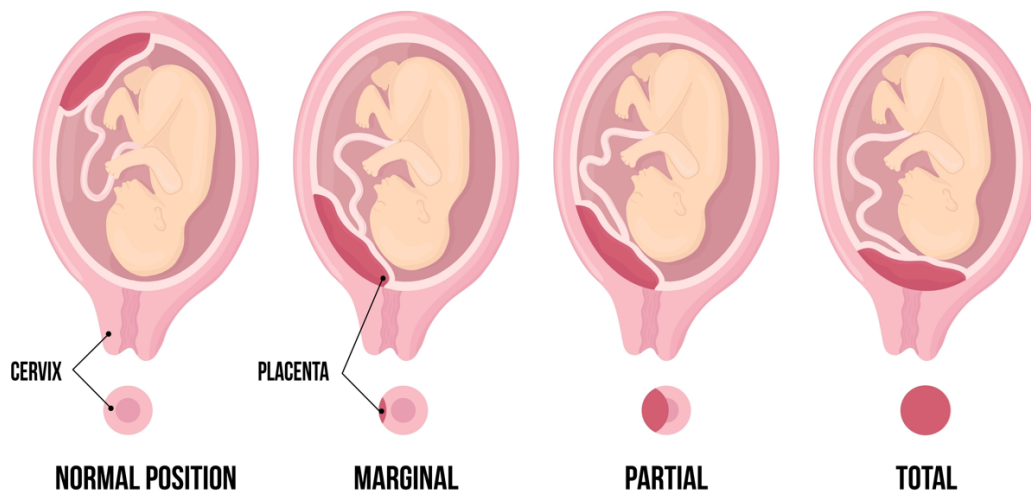


# Understanding Placenta Previa

Placenta previa is a condition in which the placenta covers all or part of the opening of the cervix during pregnancy. The placenta is a special organ that grows during pregnancy to give the baby oxygen and food from the mother. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus. The cervix opens, or dilates, during labor to allow the baby to be born.

Normally, the placenta is not near the cervix. If the placenta covers the cervix, it can cause bleeding and problems when the cervix starts to open and during birth. Placenta previa can be found by ultrasound in the second or third trimester.



In placenta previa, the placenta covers part or all of the opening of the cervix.

Pregnancy with placenta previa can feel stressful. You are not alone. Many people have healthy births with care and support. Your care team is here to help you and your baby stay safe.

## Why Does Placenta Previa Happen?

You have a higher risk for placenta previa if:

- You have been pregnant before, especially with twins or more.
- You have had surgery on the uterus before.
- You are over 35.

- You smoke during pregnancy.
- The pregnancy was conceived with in vitro fertilization.

## Symptoms and Diagnosis

- There may be bleeding from the vagina, usually without pain, in the second or third trimester.
- Most of the time, placenta previa is found during a routine prenatal ultrasound. This test uses sound waves to show the baby and the placenta inside the uterus.

## Treatment

If you have placenta previa, your care team may suggest:

- Rest and no heavy lifting
- Pelvic rest, meaning no sex, tampons, douches, or anything else in the vagina
- Frequent checkups to track the issue
- Medicine to help prevent an early birth
- Steroid shots to help the baby's lungs grow in case of early labor
- Possibly, planning for birth by Cesarean delivery, or C-section

## Risks

If not managed, placenta previa can lead to:

- Dangerous bleeding during birth
- Need for blood transfusions
- Early birth, which may mean the baby needs extra care

## Prevention

The position of the placenta is not something parents can control or cause. It is important to:

- Go to your prenatal visits and scheduled ultrasounds. This way, your care team can find placenta previa early in pregnancy to prepare for delivery.
- Avoid smoking during pregnancy to lower the risk.

## Outlook

With careful monitoring and planning, nearly all women with placenta previa have healthy deliveries when followed by their care team.

## Questions for Your Care Team

- How often do I need checkups?
- What should I do if I notice bleeding?
- What are my delivery options?

## When to Call Your Care Team

Call your care team if you notice:

- Any vaginal bleeding during your pregnancy, even if it is light or painless
- Any pain or cramping
- Any changes in baby movement patterns
- New symptoms or concerns you want to discuss

## When to Call 911 or Go to the Emergency Room

Get help right away if you have:

- Heavy vaginal bleeding, like a period or worse
- Severe abdominal pain or contractions that do not go away



- Symptoms of shock, such as feeling weak, dizzy, or fainting

## **Thank You for Choosing Us**

Thank you for trusting us with your care. We are here to support you and want you to feel your best. Contact us with any questions.

**IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY, CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.**

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

Last updated May 2025