

# Warning signs during pregnancy

You might get symptoms during your pregnancy that are common and not a cause for alarm.

But if you have any symptoms that are causing you concern, contact your midwife, GP or obstetrician immediately. Always trust your instincts. It's best to be safe.

## Get urgent help now

### Contact your midwife, GP or obstetrician immediately if:

- you are bleeding from the vagina or have severe stomach pain
- your [baby's usual pattern of movement](#) has changed
- you have a [severe headache](#), especially with other symptoms including blurred vision, upper stomach pain, nausea or swelling
- you are very emotionally distressed or feel your [mental health is in crisis](#)
- one of your calves is red, swollen and hot
- you have symptoms like pain when peeing, high temperature, or needing to pee more than normal
- any stomach pain feels like tightening

## Check common warning signs

It can sometimes be hard to tell the difference between a warning sign or a normal pregnancy symptom. Talk to your GP, obstetrician or midwife if you are worried.

Common warning signs include:

- bleeding from the vagina
- stomach pain
- shortness of breath or chest pain
- swollen ankles, feet and fingers in pregnancy
- mental health and emotional distress
- a change in your baby's normal movements

## Bleeding from the vagina

Vaginal bleeding is common during pregnancy. It does not always mean that there is a problem with your pregnancy. But sometimes it can be a dangerous sign.

### ⚠ Important

Always speak to your GP, midwife or obstetrician if you notice any bleeding from your vagina.

You might bleed for different reasons depending on how far along in your pregnancy you are.

### Vaginal bleeding in the first trimester

You might have vaginal bleeding during the [first trimester \(0 to 12 weeks\)](#) for any of the following reasons:

- implantation bleeding, sometimes called '[spotting](#)' - this happens very early on in your pregnancy (after 6 to 10 days), because the fertilised egg has attached to the inner lining of your womb
- hormonal changes - these can cause changes to your cervix (the neck of the womb) that mean you bleed more easily, for example after sex
- threatened miscarriage - this is where your pregnancy is developing as normal but you are bleeding from your vagina
- [miscarriage](#) - sometimes bleeding in pregnancy may mean a loss of a pregnancy

In some cases, you might also bleed for the following reasons:

- [ectopic pregnancy](#) - this is when the pregnancy develops outside the womb
- [molar pregnancy](#) - this is a rare condition where your pregnancy does not develop normally from the very beginning

### Vaginal bleeding in the second and third trimesters

Vaginal bleeding during the [second trimester \(13 to 26 weeks\)](#) and [third trimester \(26 to 40 weeks\)](#) is common.

But always contact your GP, midwife or obstetrician urgently if you experience any bleeding.

You might bleed for any of the following reasons:

- 'late' miscarriage - this is the term used to describe the loss of a pregnancy between 12 and 23 weeks
- problems with the cervix or neck of the womb - this includes infection or inflammation
- [placenta praevia](#) - this is where your placenta is lying low in your womb and covering some or all of your cervix (the neck of your womb)
- placental abruption (rupture) - this is not common, but is dangerous as the placenta starts to

come away, and may be accompanied by tummy pain

Vaginal bleeding later on in pregnancy can also be a sign of [going into labour](#), otherwise known as a 'show'. This is especially true if you also have tightenings or pains in your lower tummy.

If you are less than 37 weeks pregnant, this might also be a sign of [premature labour](#).

## Stomach pain

You will normally get some stomach pain while you are pregnant.

In your first trimester ([weeks 0 to 12](#)) it is common to feel mild pains in your lower tummy area. These are caused by hormonal changes and by your growing womb.

You might have more severe stomach pain in your second and third trimester.

You might also have stomach pain at any point in your pregnancy because of:

- [urinary tract infection](#)
- [constipation](#) or trapped wind
- [premature or preterm labour](#) - if you are less than 37 weeks pregnant

Talk with your healthcare team if you are worried about your stomach pain.

[Stomach pain and cramps in pregnancy](#)

## Change in your baby's movements

Contact your midwife, obstetrician or maternity hospital immediately if:

you notice any change in your baby's movements

A reduction or change in your baby's movements could be a warning sign that:

- your baby is unwell
- your baby does not have enough fluid around them
- there is a risk of you having a [stillbirth](#)

[Your baby's movements during pregnancy](#)

## Shortness of breath or chest pain

Being [short of breath](#) is common during pregnancy, particularly in your third trimester.

## Swollen ankles, feet and fingers in pregnancy

You might have [swollen ankles, feet or fingers](#) at any point in your pregnancy. This is very common.

But a sudden increase in your swelling could be a sign of [pre-eclampsia](#). This is a condition that needs to be monitored as soon as possible.

## Mental health and emotional distress

Mental health issues in pregnancy are common and can be treated.

Use the following guides to find out more and get help:

- [mental health and emotional changes in your first trimester](#)
- [mental health and emotional changes in your second trimester](#)
- [mental health and emotional changes in your third trimester](#)
- [how to help yourself and get help for any mental health concerns](#)

Perinatal mental health services are available in all maternity units and hospitals. They provide specialist support if you are experiencing mental health problems in pregnancy. Your GP, midwife, doctor or psychiatrist can refer you to the service.

## Other common warning signs

Find out more about these other common warning signs during pregnancy:

- [headaches in pregnancy](#)
- [varicose veins in pregnancy](#)
- [leg cramps during pregnancy](#)

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# Sláintecare.

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