

# Shortness of breath or chest pain in pregnancy

Shortness of breath is common during pregnancy, especially in the third trimester (weeks 27 to 40).

The size of your womb and the position of your baby can make it hard for your lungs to expand.

The extra weight of the baby you are carrying can also make you feel short of breath. When this happens, stop what you are doing and breathe slowly. There is no risk to your baby.

As the baby moves lower in your pelvis towards the end of your pregnancy, this problem should ease.

**Go to your nearest Emergency Department (ED) or call 112 or 999 immediately if:**

- your shortness of breath is sudden or severe
- you have shortness of breath and chest pain, heart palpitations or dizziness
- you have shortness of breath and bleeding from your vagina during your pregnancy or after the birth of your baby

Other causes of shortness of breath during pregnancy include:

## Anaemia

[Anaemia](#) (being low in iron) can cause shortness of breath.

## Pre-eclampsia

Pre-eclampsia is a condition where your blood pressure rises during pregnancy or soon after birth.

This could cause shortness of breath, especially if you have other symptoms of pre-eclampsia such as:

- a headache
- blurred vision
- upper tummy pain
- nausea
- vomiting

- swelling of your hands, feet, ankles, face or neck

If you have a combination of these symptoms, talk to your GP, obstetrician or midwife.

Most people diagnosed with pre-eclampsia go on to have a healthy pregnancy. But if pre-eclampsia is not treated it can be dangerous and even fatal for you and your baby.

Read more about [pre-eclampsia](#)

## Pulmonary embolism

This is a life-threatening condition. Pulmonary embolism happens when a clot in your leg called [deep vein thrombosis \(DVT\)](#) moves to your lungs.

### Call 112 or 999 immediately if you:

- have sudden difficulty breathing
- have severe pain or tightness in your chest or upper back
- are coughing blood

These can be signs of a blood clot in the lungs (pulmonary embolism).

Read about [pulmonary embolism](#)

## Asthma

If you have [asthma](#), pregnancy may make your symptoms more severe.

### Contact your GP or your GP nurse urgently if

you have asthma and you are:

- using your reliever inhaler more than usual
- coughing or wheezing more than usual, especially at night
- feeling short of breath

These are signs that your asthma needs to be checked. Your medicines may need to be changed.

## Lung infections (including flu, COVID-19 and pneumonia)

If you have a cough that lasts more than 2 to 3 days always contact your GP. Simple infections can be more serious during pregnancy.

This is why it is recommended to:

- [have the flu vaccine when you are pregnant](#)
- check if you need a [COVID-19 vaccine or booster](#)

[COVID-19 and pregnancy](#)

[Pneumonia](#)

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