Guide to monitoring of fetal movements

Baby’s Movement:
The woman is the best person to tell that their baby is alive and well. Listening to the baby’s heartbeat is reassuring to the woman and to the midwife or doctor at the time that listening is occurring but the baby’s movements tell us a lot more information.

When should the woman start feeling movements?
- Babies start moving early in the pregnancy but often women don’t feel them for quite a long time as the movements are gentle or not recognisable at first.
- Some women say that they recognise movements earlier in second and further pregnancies as they know what they are feeling for. At first the movements may feel like flutters or wind moving around.
- Movements can be felt by most women by about half way through the pregnancy (about 20 weeks). For some women it is a few weeks earlier or later.
- At first the movements may be spaced widely apart. In fact, the woman may feel movements one day and not notice any the next. (In this early part of the pregnancy the baby may be moving and kicking regularly, but many of these movements won’t be strong enough for the woman to feel.) Later those reassuring movements will become stronger and more regular. They include kicks, pushes, stretches and hiccoughs.
- Each baby has its’ own individual pattern of movement, and there’s no correct one. It’s encouraging if the woman’s baby keeps up its usual activity level.

Suggest that the woman chooses a time of day when she can sit and focus on the baby’s movement and pay attention to the number of movements that the baby makes in the hour around that time. Over a number of days the woman can get a sense of what her baby gets up to in that time period. This is the woman’s baby’s baseline or normal pattern.

It may be useful for the woman to have this awareness for times that she may be busy or have any concerns regarding your baby’s activity levels.

- It is requested that the woman becomes familiar with their baby’s pattern of movement.
- Baby’s are like people, some are more active and may have busier times in the day. The majority of babies move more than ten (10) times a day. Women too are likely to have periods where they are less able to focus on the baby’s movements as they are busy themselves.
- Each woman should get to know the usual pattern and number of movements for her individual pregnancy.

Changes to fetal movements
- Closer to the end of the pregnancy the movements may feel less vigorous. It is thought that this is because the baby takes up more of your uterus and doesn’t have as much room to kick and stretch out strongly. Movements may be restricted by the closeness of the walls of the uterus.
- But the pattern of activity should be similar in regularity to before.
- In early labour the baby should continue a similar pattern of movement.

When should a change in fetal movements raise concern?
- If there is a significant change in the pattern of movement, a decrease in the amount or strength of movements, it takes a lot longer to move or it has stopped moving altogether.
- Please contact the GP Liaison Midwife or doctor or ring the Delivery Ward or Birth Centre for advice anytime day or night. Phone 95158420 ask for Delivery Ward or Birth Centre.