

Even before birth, your pēpi (baby) is moving frequently. As they grow, you notice the movement more. Later in pregnancy, pēpi begins to become more active, and you are more likely to feel the movements.

Some people feel more movements, and some don't feel as many. Whether your pēpi is very active/strong, or gentle/mild, regular movements are a sign pēpi is well.

Check in with pēpi

Throughout your pregnancy, it is important to “check in” with pēpi. There is no “usual” number of movements. As you continue your pregnancy, you will notice the unique patterns of pēpi; this is their normal. For example, some women find that their pēpi moves more in the morning or evening, after meals, or when laying or sitting down.

You will be able to detect when the pattern of movements has changed. A change may be a decrease in the pattern, frequency or strength of the movements. Some women choose to keep a written record.

If you notice the pattern or amount of movement has changed, it may be a sign pēpi is unwell.

Around half of women who had a stillbirth noticed their pēpi movements had changed. Call your LMC, obstetrician, or Women's Assessment Unit (09 631 0784) immediately if you notice the movements of pēpi are out of their normal routine. This is important, as further assessments may be needed to check on the health of pēpi.

First movements

Feeling pēpi move for the first time is an exciting sign you are progressing in your pregnancy.

Most women feel pēpi begin to move around 16-22 weeks. If this is your first pregnancy, you will possibly feel the movements later, towards 22 weeks.

The first movements often feel like flutters, bubbles, or pulses. However, as pēpi grows, these movements will become stronger and more regular. Each pēpi has their own “normal” pattern.

End of pregnancy movements

From 28 weeks, you should feel regular, unmistakable movements every day.

As your pregnancy progresses, pēpi may rest for longer in between their active times. Their sleep cycles usually last 20 to 40 minutes, and never longer than 90 minutes.

It is not true that pēpi moves less towards the end of your pregnancy.

The position of your placenta will not affect whether you are able to feel the change in movements of pēpi.

Can I make pēpi move?

Only a midwife or a doctor has the skills to assess the heartbeat and movements of pēpi correctly.

Do not use an at-home Doppler or a phone app to listen to your pēpi heartbeat. These are not reliable and can give you false reassurance.

Having something to eat or drink to “wake pēpi up” does not work.

Call your LMC or WAU immediately if you are concerned in any way about the movements of your pēpi.

I am concerned about the movements of pēpi

If you notice the usual movements of your pēpi has changed in any way, whether that is a change in strength, frequency, or both, **call your LMC, obstetrician, or Women’s Assessment Unit (09 631 0784) immediately.**

Your LMC may want to assess you. They may ask you to come in for a check-up.

Your LMC cares about the health of you and pēpi. Please don’t hesitate to call, regardless of the time of day.

Do not wait until the next morning or your next appointment.

Your assessment may include:

- Monitoring of your pēpi heart rate using a CTG (cardiotocograph) machine
- Measuring your pēpi growth
- Ultrasound scan
- Blood test

If there are concerns with any of the results, your midwife will consult with a specialist obstetrician.

If you have had a check-up and everything with pēpi was fine, but decreased movements continue, contact your LMC or WAU again. Please do not hesitate to call again if you are still concerned.

WAU Contact

If you have any concerns, or you can’t get in contact with your LMC, please call or visit WAU for assessment.

Phone: 09 631 0784

Location: Level 9, Auckland City Hospital

References

Your Baby’s Movements Matter, Safer Baby Australia, December 2022

Baby’s Movements, MATPI003, Capital, Coast and Hutt Valley, January 2023