

QUICK TIPS

Blood pressure is often highest three to six days after baby's birth – a nurse, midwife, or doctor will need to check your blood pressure.

Phone your doctor or midwife or come to hospital if you have any of these symptoms:

- Headache that does not feel better after taking Tylenol
- Difficulty seeing clearly
- Chest pain or tightness or feeling short of breath
- Pain above your stomach or on the upper right side of your abdomen
- Feeling unwell or vomiting

If your blood pressure is high only during pregnancy, it will likely be normal again in six weeks

If baby was born early because the condition of high blood pressure worsened, you should be checked for high blood pressure when you are not pregnant.

Waiting at least two years before getting pregnant again may lessen the chance of having high blood pressure in your next pregnancy

If you are overweight, losing weight before getting pregnant again will improve your overall health and may lessen the chance of having high blood pressure in another pregnancy.



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MY BLOOD PRESSURE WAS HIGH IN PREGNANCY

NOW WHAT?



FIRST SIX WEEKS POSTPARTUM

It will take about six weeks for your body to get back to normal. Blood pressure may be highest three to six days after your baby's birth. Your blood pressure should be checked by a nurse or your midwife or doctor during this time. It is important to go to all of your appointments.

Women stay in hospital until there are signs that the condition that caused high blood pressure in pregnancy is getting better. Sometimes (not often) the condition becomes worse after going home from hospital. Most women have symptoms if this happens.

Phone your doctor or midwife or come to the hospital if you experience any of these symptoms:

- Headache that does not feel better after taking Tylenol
- Difficulty seeing clearly
- Chest pain or tightness or feeling short of breath
- Pain above your stomach or on the upper right side of your abdomen
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You may need to continue to take medicine for a few weeks after giving birth to keep the blood pressure normal. It is fine to breast-feed while taking most blood pressure medications, for example, Labetalol, Nifedipine (Adalat), or Methyldopa (Aldomet). If you will be taking a different medicine, ask your doctor about how safe it is while breastfeeding.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR OR MIDWIFE

When is my follow-up appointment to check my blood pressure?

Date: _____ Time: _____ Where: _____

Do I need to take medication for my blood pressure?

Medication: _____ Frequency: _____

Is it ok to breastfeed while taking this medicine? _____

Do I need to be checked for other conditions that may have caused me to have high blood pressure in pregnancy? _____

When? _____

Do I need to lose weight before getting pregnant again? _____

What is my body mass index (BMI)? _____ (A BMI higher than 25 is overweight)

DIET AND LIFESTYLE SUGGESTIONS

Sometimes high blood pressure in pregnancy is the first sign of a condition that may continue to cause high blood pressure after the baby is born. This is more common if it was necessary for the baby to be born early. Your doctor or midwife may recommend urine or blood tests or electrocardiography (heart monitoring) to test for causes of high blood pressure when you are not pregnant.

Pregnancy sometimes makes us aware of necessary lifestyle changes to keep our bodies healthy. We know that women who are overweight have a greater chance of having high blood pressure in pregnancy. We also know that women who gain weight between pregnancies have a greater chance in the next pregnancy to have high blood pressure, caesarean section, and diabetes. You can find trustworthy diet and exercise advice at: <https://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/articles/topic/pregnancy>.

If your blood pressure remains high when you are not pregnant, you can visit the Canadian Hypertension Education Program website at www.hypertension.ca.

PLANNING ANOTHER PREGNANCY?

After having high blood pressure in one pregnancy, planning another pregnancy may be worrisome. There is less chance of having high blood pressure in the next pregnancy if you wait at least two years, but not more than nine years, between pregnancies. The chance of having high blood pressure in the next pregnancy will be less if you make sure your weight is in the normal range and you start exercising regularly. Eating enough calcium rich foods (dairy products) may also lessen your chance of having high blood pressure in the next pregnancy.

