

Discussion Guide: Preventing Preeclampsia

Getting started on prevention:

- > Ask your doctor or midwife about your risk for preeclampsia
- > Create an action plan with your care team to get ahead of preeclampsia
- > Be vigilant for signs and symptoms if it does occur
- > Know when to notify your clinicians with concerns

Things to discuss with your doctor or midwife:

Monitoring

High blood pressure is often the first sign of preeclampsia developing, and an increase in blood pressure usually causes no symptoms – so you won't know unless you check. **You should notify your care team if your blood pressure is over 140/90. It is an emergency if it is 160/110 or higher, for either number.**

- Should you check your blood pressure at home?
How often?
 - Daily
 - Weekly
 - Other
- What's the best way to notify your care team if your blood pressure is over 140/90?
- What should you do if either number is higher than 160/100?
- Do you know your blood pressure cuff size? _____
- Which validated home blood pressure cuff do they recommend?

Tip: Visit StrideBP.org for a maintained list and filter for "pregnancy"

It's also very important to know all the signs and symptoms of preeclampsia so you can seek immediate care if it develops. Have you reviewed all the signs and symptoms of preeclampsia? **Many are easy to confuse with normal pregnancy symptoms.**

- Blood pressure is over 140/90
- Swelling of face or hands
- Sudden weight gain
- Pain in the abdomen or shoulder
- Seeing spots, blurry vision, or other changes in eyesight
- Nausea and vomiting in the second half of pregnancy
- Shortness of breath
- Headache that will not go away

Medication & Labs

Aspirin has been shown to be a safe and effective medication to lower your preeclampsia risk. You may have already started taking it, but there may be more to discuss:

- Should you start taking aspirin?
- If you are already taking aspirin, should you continue it?
- Should you be taking it at night?
Tip: Studies have shown that night works better

(over)

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Medication & Labs (continued)

Your provider may also want to check your liver function, kidney function, and for protein in the urine. Do you need your baseline labs evaluated?

- Liver function Kidney function Protein in urine Already all completed N/A

Nutrition & Lifestyle

Nutrition can have a big impact on your pregnancy health and preeclampsia risk. The Mediterranean diet can lower the risk of preeclampsia. Vitamin D and calcium are also important. Should you consider any of these changes?

- Adding more fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet
- Taking vitamin D 600-2000 IU (international units) daily, including the amount in prenatal vitamin
- Seeking a dietitian to get an estimate of your daily dietary calcium intake
- If there's less than 800 mg of calcium in your diet every day, trying to increase that to at least 1000mg
- Tip:** If you're not able to do so with diet alone, consider a 500 mg calcium supplement

Exercise can lower your preeclampsia risk significantly. The most effective exercises are a combination of aerobic exercise and strength training. Check in with your doctor or midwife on the following:

- Exercising for 30-60 minutes, at least 3-4 times per week
- Selecting exercise(s) that feel right for you
- Tip:** Even small amounts of activity are beneficial for your health

Sleep is an important part of preventing preeclampsia. While it may seem simple, it can make a difference. Some women also have sleep apnea, a condition that causes breathing problems while asleep.

Discuss the following with your doctor or midwife:

- Getting at least 7 hours of sleep every night
- Let them know if you feel overly tired, are snoring, or having pauses in breathing while you sleep
- If you are already receiving treatment for sleep apnea, remember to continue with your treatment

Learn more on [PreeclampsiaPrevention.com](https://www.PreeclampsiaPrevention.com)

