



## Kicks Count!

Counting your baby's kicks is a great way for you and your partner to bond with your baby. By performing a kick count at the same time every day during your last trimester, you can also help your doctor monitor your baby's health. **What your baby is telling you with its kicks is important!**

Doctors recommend that parents start counting and keeping track of their baby's kicks beginning in the 28th week of pregnancy. By doing this every day, you will get to know within a week or two what your baby's normal pattern is. By using a kick count chart, you and your doctor will be able to tell if there are any changes in your baby's normal pattern.

Studies show that a major decrease in your baby's normal pattern could be a signal that there's a problem.



**Counting kicks is a simple, inexpensive and effective way to monitor your baby's health and may reduce the risk of stillbirth!!**

## Performing a Kick Count

Pick a time of day when your baby is usually most active, ideally after you have had a snack or light meal. It is best to perform your kick count at the same time every day. Sit with your feet up or lie down on your side when you are ready to start counting. If you think your baby is asleep, try pushing on your tummy or getting up and walking around for a few minutes to wake him. You can also try drinking something cold. Don't start counting until you know your baby is awake.

- Count each of your baby's movements as one kick. Kicks include twists, turns, swishes, rolls and jabs. Don't count hiccups!
- Count until you reach 10 kicks and log the number of minutes it took on your chart. It will take most moms less than 30 minutes to count 10 kicks, but could take up to two hours.

After a week or two, you will see that the kicking varies from day to day, but for the most part the days seem similar. This will continue to be the case for a healthy baby.

**Download a kicks count chart at [www.firstcandle.org/new-expectant-parents](http://www.firstcandle.org/new-expectant-parents).**

## Using a kicks count chart

Using a kicks count chart is easy! Make sure you note the day you begin counting, your due date and the time of day you will be counting at the top of the chart.

Remember, each twist, turn, swish, roll or jab counts as one kick!

When you have performed your kick count for Day 1, simply check the box that corresponds with the number of minutes it took for you to feel 10 kicks. For example, if it took 15 minutes, you would go down the Day 1 column until you found the line for 11-15 minutes and put your check mark in that box. If it took an hour, you would scroll down to the line for 56-60 minutes and put your check mark there.

That's it! Repeat the same process every day for the remaining weeks of your pregnancy. Take your chart with you to your doctor visits.

5 Minutes	DAY				
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
0-5					
6-10					
11-15	✓				
16-20					
21-25					
26-30					
31-35					
36-40					
41-45					
46-50					
51-55					
56-60	✓				
61-65					
66-70					
71-75					

**If you notice a significant decrease in your baby's activity, call your doctor immediately!**

## What to do if you are worried

If you are worried about your baby, you should always ask your doctor for advice. But there are certain situations when you should call your doctor immediately:

- If your baby kicks less and less in the course of a day or you don't feel any kicks on any given day.
- If you don't feel 10 kicks in a two-hour period when your baby is usually active, recount within 1-2 hours. If you get the same results, call your doctor immediately.
- If you have been evaluated for decreased fetal movement and sent home, make sure you follow up as instructed or within one week.
- It might be helpful to know that very rarely does a baby kick less than 10 times during a two-hour period.
- It is also important to note that all babies have regular sleep/wake cycles and your baby will sleep many times a day. However, even near the end of pregnancy, most babies do not sleep for longer than one hour at a time. Make sure your baby is awake before you start counting!

**Never wait until the next day to call your doctor if you are feeling decreased activity!**

## Additional Tests

Once you report decreased activity, your doctor should have you come to the office or go directly to your hospital's labor and delivery unit. There are other tests that can be done to check on your baby's health:

- Non-stress test - monitoring your baby's heart rate in response to its own movements.
- Ultrasound - taking pictures from sound waves to check the growth of the baby, amniotic fluid quantity, placenta, blood flow pattern, etc.
- Biophysical profile - using an ultrasound exam with a non-stress test to evaluate your baby's heart rate, breathing, body movement, muscle tone and amniotic fluid quantity.
- Contraction stress test – monitoring your baby's heart rate in response to uterine contractions.

**Never hesitate to get a second opinion if you feel you are not getting a thorough evaluation and/or you continue to be worried.**

## Other important things to know

Monitoring your health during the last trimester is important too. Here are some helpful tips:

**Continue good prenatal care** Eat well, get plenty of rest and keep all doctor appointments. Keep diabetes and high blood pressure under control.

**Know the warning signs of premature labor** Call your doctor if you have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Contractions (abdomen tightening like a fist every 10 minutes or more often)
- Vaginal bleeding or leaking fluid
- Pelvic pressure (like your baby is pushing down)
- Low, dull backache
- Cramps that feel like your period
- Abdominal cramps (with or without diarrhea)

**Take a childbirth class** This will help you prepare for labor and delivery.

**Safe sleep saves lives! Learn about the importance of safe sleep for your baby before you leave the hospital. Visit [www.firstcandle.org/bedtimebasics](http://www.firstcandle.org/bedtimebasics).**

## First Candle

is the nation's leading organization dedicated to promoting safe pregnancies and the survival of babies through the first years of life. It is our primary goal to ensure that every baby is provided with the best possible chance to reach not only his or her first birthday, but many happy birthdays beyond.

First Candle is the leader in a national movement to bring much-needed attention to stillbirth, which claims the lives of 70 babies each day in the United States. The concept of kick counting is being recognized as the first proactive strategy that may reduce the risk of stillbirth.

**More information on stillbirth, as well as other tips to help your baby survive and thrive, can be found on the First Candle web site at [www.firstcandle.org](http://www.firstcandle.org).**

*\*This brochure is also available in Spanish.*



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