



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND PRE-ECLAMPSIA DURING PREGNANCY

WHAT IS HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE AND WHY IS IT A CONCERN DURING PREGNANCY?

- High blood pressure (hypertension) is diagnosed after at least 2 blood pressure readings are high.
 - Stage 1 Hypertension readings range from 130-139 over 80-89
 - Stage 2 Hypertension readings are above 140 over 90
- High readings mean there is an increased pressure on your blood vessels that bring blood and oxygen to your organs and the placenta.
- Hypertension during pregnancy can affect you and your baby.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF HYPERTENSION IN PREGNANCY?

- Chronic Hypertension: High blood pressure that develops before pregnancy or early in pregnancy (before 20 weeks). You may have already been taking medications to control your blood pressure prior to getting pregnant.
- Gestational Hypertension: High blood pressure that develops after 20 weeks of pregnancy diagnosed by at least two blood pressure readings of 140/90 or higher. There is no excess protein in your urine or signs of organ damage.
- Pre-eclampsia: High blood pressure that develops after 20 weeks along with protein in your urine or signs of organ damage. Organs that can be damaged include your kidneys, liver, blood, or brain.
 - Diagnosis is made by testing urine and blood samples for signs of organ damage.
 - Pre-eclampsia can lead to serious or even fatal complications for you and your baby including seizures, stroke, and blood clotting dysfunction that can cause excessive bleeding.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF HAVING HYPERTENSION IN PREGNANCY?

- **Less blood flow to the placenta** which can limit blood flow and oxygen to your baby. This can lead to slow growth, low birth weight, or premature delivery.
- **Placental abruption** which is the separation of the placenta from the wall of the uterus. A large separation can cause heavy bleeding which can be life-threatening to you or your baby.
- **Injury to other organs** including your kidneys, liver, brain, and clotting mechanisms if you have pre-eclampsia. Poorly controlled chronic hypertension can affect all of your organ systems including your eyes, lung, and heart.

- **Premature delivery** which may be required to prevent life-threatening complications to you and your baby.
- **Future cardiovascular disease** which can be associated with pre-eclampsia if you've had it with more than one pregnancy or if you had a premature delivery related to your hypertension.

HOW IS HYPERTENSION MANAGED DURING PREGNANCY?

- Your blood pressure will be taken each visit.
- Your urine will be checked for excess protein. Blood may be drawn to check for signs of pre-eclampsia.
- You may be prescribed medication to lower your blood pressure.
- You may be started on daily low-dose aspirin to help prevent the development of pre-eclampsia.
- You will have additional surveillance starting some time in your 3rd trimester to monitor the health of your baby. This may include additional appointments, ultrasounds, fetal monitoring, or a referral to the perinatologists (high-risk OB doctors).
- You will be scheduled for induction of labor prior to your due date. The timing of the induction will depend on the type and severity of your hypertension or pre-eclampsia.

WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY AS HEALTHY AS POSSIBLE IF I HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH HYPERTENSION?

- Keep your prenatal appointments as scheduled
- Stay active. Check with your provider regarding any activity restrictions related to your diagnosis.
- Eat a healthy diet. Limit processed, fatty, and salty foods.
- Pay attention to your body and your baby's movement.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL THE OFFICE?

- The symptoms that require an immediate call are:
 - Severe headache
 - Blurred vision or other vision changes
 - Upper abdominal or shoulder pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Vaginal bleeding like a period
 - Severe abdominal pain that does not go away
 - Sudden weight gain and/or swelling of the hands and face
 - Sudden onset of nausea and vomiting (after 20 weeks)
 - Decrease in baby's movements

PIWH providers are on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have concerns that worry you, please contact the office any time at 717-737-4511. During office hours, choose option 4 to reach a triage nurse.