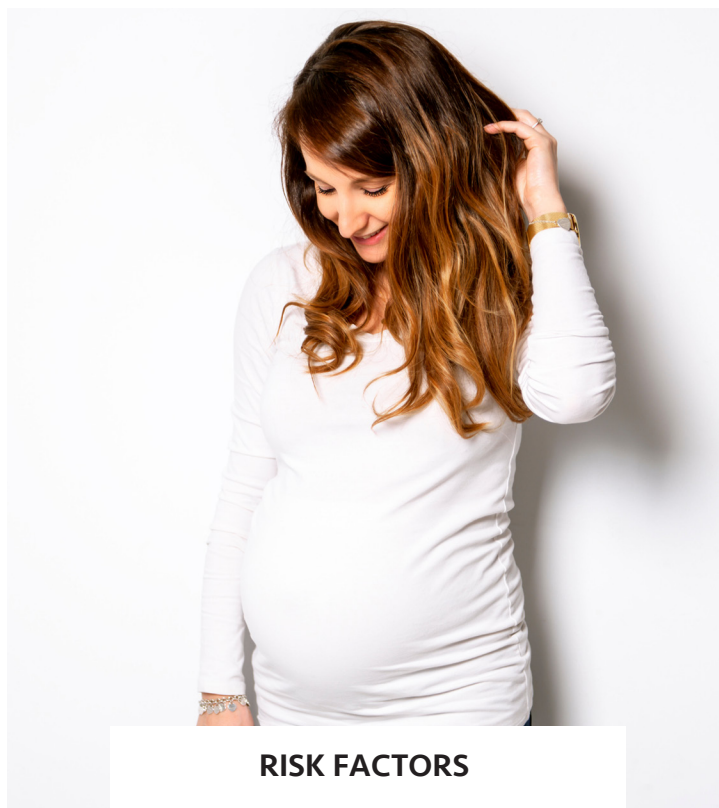




Pregnancy over age 35

While older moms may have more risks overall, age is only one factor in a healthy pregnancy. Women in the U.S. are choosing to have babies at a later age. Women can take actions to boost their health and lower or manage their risks.



RISK FACTORS

- Infertility. A woman's ability to get pregnant is at its peak at age 18-20. It drops significantly by age 36 to 40, and more so after age 40. A woman ovulates (produces eggs) less often as she gets older.
- Already having an illness. They are more likely to have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, or epilepsy.
- Longer hospital stays before delivery
- A baby with Down's syndrome. This causes mild to moderate intellectual disability.
- Illnesses caused by pregnancy. Examples: gestational diabetes and preeclampsia.
- Bleeding during pregnancy. Placenta previa and placenta abruptio are more common.
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Cesarean (C-section) delivery. Older women have an 8% greater chance.
- Low birth-weight baby. Babies are often delivered early due to problems. A low birth-weight baby weighs less than 5-1/2 pounds.

DIAGNOSIS

Older women planning a first pregnancy are screened for medical problems. Their health care provider also studies both parents' age, race, ethnic background, and prior illnesses. Health problems can come through either parent's family to the baby. Such problems are called genetic illnesses.

Tests done on older women may include:

- **Quad screen test.** A blood sample is tested for 4 substances in the mother's blood. These show a higher risk for certain birth defects. This test is done between weeks 15 and 20.
- **CVS.** A sample of the placenta is taken during weeks 8 to 12 to check for genetic illnesses.
- **Ultrasound.** A picture of the inside of the uterus is taken. It can show problems in the fetus's organs. It can show where the placenta is placed. An ultrasound is usually given at week 12. But all women over age 35 do not get an ultrasound at week 12.
- **Amniocentesis.** A sample of the fluid inside the uterus is taken during weeks 15 to 18. The fluid surrounds the fetus. This test can show problems like Down's syndrome.



TRIAGE QUESTIONS



Do you have any of these signs?

- Bright red vaginal bleeding
- Severe pain in your abdomen

NO
↓

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Do you have sudden vaginal bleeding? Or, do you pass large clots of blood?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **GET EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**



Are you more than 20 weeks into your pregnancy? Do you have any of these signs?

- Extreme swelling of the face, hands, ankles, or feet
- Blurry vision or spots before your eyes
- Severe headaches or feeling dizzy
- Feeling sick to your stomach, throwing up, and severe pain
- Rapid weight gain (more than 3 pounds a week in the 2nd trimester or more than 1 pound a week in the 3rd trimester)

NO
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YES ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Do you have any signs of anemia?

NO
↓

YES ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



Do you have any symptoms of high blood sugar?

- Gaining 2 or more pounds a week
- Feeling very thirsty all the time
- Feeling more tired than usual
- Needing to pass urine more often than any time in your pregnancy

NO
↓

YES ➔ **CALL DOCTOR**



USE SELF-CARE



SELF-CARE

- Early and regular prenatal care will help you stay healthy. It will help your baby stay healthy, too.
- Get plenty of sleep and rest.
- Follow your health care provider's advice for any medical problem you have.
- Eat healthy meals and snacks. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, lean proteins, and healthy fats, such as olive and canola oil. Include calcium-rich foods, like low fat dairy, and greens. Some juices and breads have calcium added. Tofu has calcium, too, if it says so on the label.
- Gain the amount of weight your health care provider advises. Drink at least 8 glasses of water a day.
- Take the daily prenatal vitamins your health care provider advises. These help supply the extra vitamins and minerals you need.
- Get regular exercise, as advised by your health care provider.
- Don't smoke, drink, or use drugs.
- Don't misuse medicines.