

Are you at risk for heart disease after having a baby?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women, including those who are pregnant or have just had a baby.



Risk

Any woman can develop heart disease during pregnancy or after delivery. You're at higher risk if you:

- ▶ Have a history of heart disease
- ▶ Are over 40 years old
- ▶ Are obese
- ▶ Have high blood pressure
- ▶ Are African-American



Symptoms

These symptoms of heart disease may occur during pregnancy, especially late pregnancy and up to five months after delivery:

- ▶ Extreme swelling or unusual weight gain
- ▶ Extreme fatigue
- ▶ Fainting
- ▶ A cough that doesn't go away
- ▶ Chest pain or fast heart beat
- ▶ Severe shortness of breath at rest (especially when lying down)



Conditions

Conditions that can increase your risk of developing heart disease over your lifetime are:

- ▶ High blood pressure in pregnancy (Preeclampsia)
- ▶ Heart failure during pregnancy or within five months after delivery
- ▶ Diabetes

What You Should Do

If you experience symptoms of heart disease:

Trust your instincts and tell your obstetrician (OB) or primary care doctor.

If the heart disease symptoms occur within five months of delivery, make sure to mention you were recently pregnant.

Obtain a second opinion if you feel you are not being heard.



Ways to Manage Your Heart Disease

To prevent future problems:

Before Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Maintain a healthy weight, exercise regularly, eat healthy foods and stop smoking. ▶ Make sure you are using medication that is safe to use during pregnancy when you want to get pregnant or going off birth control.
During Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Go to your prenatal care visits. ▶ Bring a support person to your appointments.
After Pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Breastfeed your baby, which lowers your risk for high blood pressure and heart disease. ▶ Go to your postpartum visit. ▶ Give a copy of your prenatal records to your primary care doctor. ▶ Monitor your heart condition annually.

This publication was produced by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division in partnership with CDPH’s Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Program and the University of California, Davis Women’s Cardiovascular Medicine Clinic, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (grant number NU58DP005499).