

| Heart Disease

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

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