

# What you need to know about high blood pressure during pregnancy!



By getting regular health check-ups, you can detect and treat health issues early, prevent health issues from developing in the first place, and have peace of mind knowing that you are in good health.



## What is high blood pressure?

- Blood pressure is the measurement of the pressure or force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls.
- When you have high blood pressure, it means the pressure against the blood vessel walls is above the normal range.
- High blood pressure is also called hypertension.



## How is high blood pressure during pregnancy different from high blood pressure at other times?

- Hypertension during pregnancy impacts your body differently than it would if you weren't pregnant. Your heart works harder during pregnancy because it has to pump much more blood. This puts extra stress on your body.
- Hypertension can also affect how the placenta develops and functions. This means the fetus may not get the nutrients it needs to grow at a normal rate.
- Both you and your child are at higher risk of complications before labour, during labour and after delivery if you have hypertension.



## What is high blood pressure during pregnancy?

- Pregnancy-related hypertension is high blood pressure that begins after 20 weeks of pregnancy and ends shortly after your baby is born.
- It happens in about 6% to 8% of pregnancies.
- Your provider may also refer to high blood pressure during pregnancy as **gestational hypertension** or **pregnancy-induced hypertension**.



## Why is gestational hypertension different than other types of hypertension?

- It starts in the second half of pregnancy and goes away after childbirth.



## **What you need to know if you have high blood pressure during pregnancy!**

- High blood pressure may not cause any noticeable symptoms, so it's important that you attend all your prenatal appointments so your pregnancy care provider can take your blood pressure.
- High blood pressure during pregnancy can lead to complications. So, your provider will monitor you and the fetus more closely and help you manage your blood pressure for the remainder of your pregnancy.



## **Why is high blood pressure in pregnancy dangerous?**

- Hypertensive disorders in pregnancy (HDP) are a common cause of maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality.
- Maternal mortality is the death of a pregnant woman caused by complications of pregnancy or childbirth.
- Perinatal mortality is the death of a fetus or newborn around the time of delivery.
- It is important to identify women who are at risk and provide them with immediate medical care!



## What are the types of Hypertension Disorders in Pregnancy (HDP)?



### Chronic Hypertension

- If you were diagnosed with high blood pressure before you got pregnant, you should speak to your doctor when your pregnancy is confirmed because some of the ordinary blood pressure medication is not suitable in pregnancy.



### Gestational Hypertension

- Gestational hypertension appears after 20 weeks of pregnancy, without protein in the urine, and goes away after childbirth.





## What are the types of Hypertension Disorders in Pregnancy (HDP)?



### Pre-eclampsia

- Pre-eclampsia is a condition only found in the second half of pregnancy (typically after 27 weeks of pregnancy), with significant protein in the urine.
- Your healthcare provider diagnoses this condition if you have elevated blood pressure readings and protein in your urine.
- It can affect your liver, kidneys, lungs or brain as well as the placenta.



### Eclampsia

- When pre-eclampsia affects the brain, patients are at risk for seizures after 20 weeks of pregnancy and within 7 days after delivery.
- These patients are in a critical stage of hypertension when they have proteins in their urine.



## Who is at higher risk of developing high blood pressure during pregnancy?

You may be more likely to develop high blood pressure during pregnancy if you:

- Are under the age 20 or over the age 40.
- Have had gestational hypertension or pre-eclampsia during past pregnancies.
- Have a family history of gestational hypertension.
- Have diabetes or gestational diabetes.
- Have an immune system disorder, such as lupus.
- Have kidney disease.
- Are expecting multiple babies (twins, triplets or more).



## What are the signs of high blood pressure during pregnancy?

High blood pressure is sometimes called “the silent killer” because most people don’t notice their blood pressure is high. Other than a provider telling you that your blood pressure is high, some other signs include:

- Swelling (edema).
- Headaches.
- Sudden weight gain.
- Changes in vision.

- Nausea or vomiting.
- Peeing only a little bit at a time.
- Pain in your abdomen (belly).



## **What can I do to reduce the risk of complications?**

Taking good care of yourself is the best way to take care of your baby. Here are some examples:

- Keep your pre-natal appointments. Visit your healthcare provider regularly throughout your pregnancy.
- Take your blood pressure medication as prescribed. Your healthcare provider will prescribe the safest medication at the most appropriate dose.
- Stay active. Follow your healthcare provider's recommendations for physical activity.
- Eat a healthy diet. Choose foods low in sodium.
- Know what's off-limits. Avoid smoking, alcohol and illicit drugs. Talk to your healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter medications.



## **Who to turn to for help!**

As a Platinum Health member you have the benefit of consulting with a healthcare provider who will assist you with making the right choices during your pregnancy. Your healthcare provider will ensure you get the appropriate care and treatment during your pregnancy.