



# Preeclampsia

## What is Preeclampsia?

Preeclampsia is a dangerous condition that some women get when they are pregnant. It usually happens during the second half of pregnancy (after 20 weeks). It can also happen during labor or after the baby is born.

Women with preeclampsia have high blood pressure. They might also have too much protein in their urine, or problems with organs like the liver, kidney, or eyes. Plus, the baby might not grow well and be small.

## What are the Symptoms?

Most women with preeclampsia do not feel any different than usual. Preeclampsia usually does not cause symptoms unless it is severe. Signs and symptoms of severe preeclampsia include

- A bad headache
- Changes in vision: blurry vision, flashes of light, spots.
- Belly pain, especially in the upper belly
- Swollen face/hands
- Weight gain of 2 or more pounds per week

## Tests for Preeclampsia

- Blood pressure checks
- Check urine for protein
- Blood work/labs

## Treatment

The only cure for preeclampsia is to deliver the baby. Your doctor will decide whether it is better for you to have your baby right away or to wait.

If you are near your due date, your doctor will probably give you medicine to start contractions. This is called “inducing labor”.

If your due date is not for several weeks, and your preeclampsia is not severe, your doctor might wait to deliver your baby. This is to give the baby more time to grow and develop. If your doctor decides to wait, he or she will check you and your baby often for any problems. You might need to stay in the hospital.

If your blood pressure is very high, your doctor might give you medicine to lower your blood pressure. This is to keep you from having a stroke. Women with preeclampsia can sometimes have seizures. Your doctor may give you medicine during labor to prevent this. Most of the time, preeclampsia will go away after you deliver. You may continue to have symptoms for a period of time after you deliver. You may have to take medications for your blood pressure after you deliver.

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## Magnesium Sulfate for Seizure Protection

Increased blood pressures increase your risk for seizures. Magnesium sulfate relaxes your muscles, thus decreasing your risk for seizures.

Your doctor will determine the amount of time the magnesium will be used.

If you deliver with magnesium sulfate, they will most likely continue treatment after delivery.

What to expect when you're on Magnesium Sulfate

- Hourly checks by your nurse
- Accurate recording of your intake (drinks) and output (urine)
- Blood pressure cuff and pulse oximeter (finger probe) on at all times
- Bedside toileting, possibly a catheter
- Continuous fetal monitoring
- Inability to leave your room. This means you will not be able to visit NICU/CCN if your baby is there until the magnesium is stopped, unless you get a special order from your doctor

### Symptoms:

- Headache
- Blurry vision/visual changes
- Hot/sweating/flushed
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Dry mouth/bad taste in your mouth
- Drowsiness/fatigue/muscle weakness

Information Use and Disclaimer:

This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from your health care provider.

Source: Lexicomp Online: Patient Care-Preterm Premature Rupture of Membranes.