

Small for Gestational Age (SGA)

My baby is smaller than expected. What does this mean?

During pregnancy, your doctor, midwife or nurse practitioner (also called Primary Care Provider) will check your baby's size. If your baby is smaller than expected at your stage of pregnancy, it could be that your baby is growing normally but smaller. This is called **Small for Gestational Age (SGA)**. It could also mean that the placenta is not working as it should. The placenta is an organ that develops in the uterus in early pregnancy. The placenta brings oxygen and nutrients from your blood to your baby.

Sometimes, the placenta does not develop or function properly because of a condition in the pregnant person. When the placenta does not work well, it is called **placental insufficiency**. When there is placental insufficiency, your baby gets less oxygen and fewer nutrients. This causes the baby to grow more slowly, a condition called **Fetal Growth Restriction (FGR)**.

If the baby does not get enough oxygen and nutrients, the baby's kidney may produce less fluid. There will be less fluid around the baby when the fluid is checked by an ultrasound exam. This condition is called **oligohydramnios (all-ee-go-hi-DRAM-nee-us)**. Fluid around the baby is very important. It protects the baby, helps the baby's lungs develop, and allows the baby to move around.

Fetal growth restriction (FGR) happens in 5-10 % of pregnancies. FGR is more common in people with high blood pressure, and in people that are pregnant with more than one baby. If you have FGR, you may need to visit your Primary Care Provider more often. You may also need to go to the hospital more often.

Many other conditions can also affect the placenta and your baby's growth. Ask your Primary Care Provider about your care plan.



How do I know my baby is ok?

Fetal Movement

You can feel when your baby is awake. They will be active. Try to learn your baby's daily patterns. They may rest and move in the same daily pattern. When you know your baby's movement patterns, it is easier to notice if your baby's pattern changes or slows down. Most healthy babies are active. If your baby's movements slow down, this can be a sign that the baby is unwell.

Read and follow the Baby Movement Counting handout

<http://www.bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/what-to-expect-in-pregnancy#The--last--few--weeks>

If you feel less than 6 movements in two hours, call your Primary Care Provider and come to the hospital Urgent Care Centre, entrance 97 at BC Women's Hospital



Fetal Heart Rate Monitoring or Non-Stress Test

Your baby's heart rate shows how your baby is doing. Your Primary Care Provider may ask you to go to the hospital for a Non-Stress Test (NST). During an NST, a monitor at the hospital measures changes in your baby's heart rate. During the NST, a nurse will secure the monitor onto your tummy with stretchy belts. The nurse will see your baby's heartbeat on a slow-moving graph on a computer screen. The nurse will also ask you to push a button when the baby moves. The NST will take from 20 minutes to 40 minutes.



Ultrasound scan

- ❖ Shows how your baby is growing.
- ❖ Shows how your baby is moving inside the uterus.
- ❖ Checks the amount of amniotic fluid around your baby.
- ❖ Measures how much blood moves through the umbilical cord to the placenta. This is called Doppler Flow. It is another way to check how your baby is doing.



What else should I know?

Be aware of tightenings or contractions

When you are pregnant, it is normal for your uterus to have painless contractions. These are called **Braxton Hicks contractions** or **tightenings**. They help prepare your baby for labour.

Contractions can be stressful for your baby if:

- Your baby is smaller than expected, or
- If your baby has less amniotic fluid than normal.

It is important to know when you are having contractions. If you have more contractions than usual, count them for one hour. If your contractions happen every 15 minutes or less (4 or more contractions an hour), contact your Primary Care Provider.

Activity Level

Some activity is good for you. Your Primary Care Provider will tell you how much activity or rest you need.

How can I help myself and my baby?

- ❖ Do a baby movement count once each day. Write down your baby's movement patterns.
- ❖ Pay attention to any contractions or tightenings you have.
- ❖ Go to all Primary Care Provider appointments.
- ❖ Go to your ultrasound and NST appointments.

When should I get help?

Contact your Primary Care Provider if you have **any** of the symptoms below. If you cannot reach your Primary Care Provider, go to the hospital.

- ❖ Fewer than 6 baby movements in 2 (two) hours
- ❖ Painful contractions every 15 minutes or less, for one hour
- ❖ A gush or trickle of fluid from the vagina
- ❖ Pain in your belly
- ❖ Bleeding or spotting from your vagina

Call 911, and be taken to the hospital by ambulance if you have:

- ❖ Vaginal bleeding, like a period or heavier

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions about the information on this sheet, please reach out to your Primary Care Provider.

