

# Decode your baby's kicks and moves

If your baby's movements slow down or feel different, it may be time to check in, says consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Jacqueline Jung Jingjin



Tracking your baby's usual movements makes it easier to detect changes. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Babies have their own way of making their presence known. What starts as the faintest flutter – like butterfly wings against your belly – gradually transforms into distinct kicks and rolls as your pregnancy progresses. These movements become your daily connection with your growing baby, creating a special language between you.

When active, babies move about 10 times within an hour, though some may take longer or show different patterns, says Mount Alvernia Hospital consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Jacqueline Jung Jingjin.

Here, she shares what to expect as your baby's movements change and when to seek medical help.

## Q When will I feel my baby move, and how does it change as pregnancy progresses?

Most women start feeling their baby's movements between 18 to 20 weeks of pregnancy, though this can vary. For second or subsequent pregnancies, you may notice those tiny flutters in as early as 16 weeks.

First-time mothers or those with an anterior placenta (where the placenta is positioned in front of the womb) may feel them later, sometimes as late as 24 weeks.

Your baby's movements will gradually become stronger and more defined, increasing until 32 weeks before settling into a steady pattern until birth. Over time, you will learn to recognise different types of movement, such as:

- Flutters (early pregnancy): Light, butterfly-like sensations or tiny gas bubble-like pops.
- Kicks and jabs (mid to late pregnancy): Sharp, quick movements, often in bursts, and could be slightly painful.
- Rolls (later pregnancy): A slow, fluid-shifting sensation as your baby adjusts their position, sometimes visible on your belly.

## Q What is considered normal foetal movement, and what factors can influence it?

You may notice your baby moving more at bedtime. This is partly because you are busier in the day, making it easier to miss those little kicks and rolls. The natural rocking motion from walking and other daily tasks also lulls your baby to sleep, thus they become more active at night.

After meals, the rise in your blood sugar levels gives your baby a boost of energy. Conversely, factors like dehydration, alcohol, smoking and sedatives can reduce baby movements. While there is no need to count every kick, it helps to be familiar with your baby's typical activity level – especially in the third trimester (28 to 40 weeks) when a sudden change could signal distress. To check your baby's activity, lie down on your left side, place your hands on your belly and track how long it takes to feel 10 movements.

## Q What should I do if I notice my baby moving less or unusually?

You can try these steps to encourage a response:

- Drink more water to avoid dehydration
- Have a meal or sweet drink to raise blood sugar
- Move about if you have been lying or sitting
- Play music or talk to your baby

If you still feel fewer than 10 movements in two hours, you should contact your doctor for a check-up.



**Dr Jacqueline Jung Jingjin**  
 Consultant Obstetrician  
 and Gynaecologist  
 ACJ Women's Clinic Pte Ltd  
 Medical Centre D #07-63