

But, Asking Questions is Not Always Enough.



You Have to Understand the Answers

Numbers can sound scary, especially during this time. Sometimes information is shared in a way that may sound more frightening than it really is and sometimes the risks are not mentioned enough. Learning to understand the numbers can help you make decisions with confidence.

Relative Risk vs. Absolute Risk

Relative Risk tells you how much the risk changed.

Absolute Risk tells you how likely it is to happen.



Imagine This

Without a certain treatment, 2 out of 100 people experience a particular complication. With the treatment, 1 out of 100 people experience it.

In this example, the risk without treatment is twice as high as the risk with treatment. That's a 100% higher relative risk. BUT, look at the actual numbers:

With treatment: 1 out of 100 = 1% AND Without treatment: 2 out of 100 = 2%

So the absolute risk difference is 1 percentage point.

Why Does This Matter?

Hearing these may sound scary:

- "Not having this treatment doubles your risk."
- "Your risk is twice as high without the treatment."
- "Your risk increases by 100% if you don't take the treatment."
- "There is a 100% increased risk if you don't take the treatment."
- "The risk is 100% higher without the treatment."
- "Not taking the treatment is associated with a 2-fold increase in risk."

But hearing these gives you more information about what "double the risk" actually means.:

- "Your chance is about 1% with the treatment and about 2% without it."
- "About 1 out of 100 people experience this with the treatment, compared with about 2 out of 100 without treatment."
- "The treatment lowers the chance from about 2 out of 100 people to about 1 out of 100 people."

These statements can all be true.

They are simply describing the difference in two different ways.

What does it all mean? This means that about 98 out of 100 people (98%) without treatment and 99 out of 100 people (99%) with treatment, would not experience this complication.

What You Can Ask

When you are getting information from your provider, it may make complete sense or it may be very confusing. You can ask these questions to help you get an answer you understand.

- “What is my actual chance?” / “What is the absolute risk?”
- “What is the actual likelihood that this will happen to me?”
- “Out of 100 pregnant people like me, about how many experience this?”
- “Is this based on my individual situation or on the general population?”
- “Does anything make my personal risk higher or lower?”
- “When you say the risk is higher, what is the actual chance or absolute risk?”
- “Could you tell me the absolute risk instead of just saying the risk increases?”



Good healthcare providers want you to understand the information they're sharing.

If You Feel Overwhelmed

It is completely understandable for someone to feel overwhelmed while trying to process all of this information. Especially because you want to make the best decision for you and your baby.

Take some time to understand.

Sometimes, you may not understand medical information in the way it is shared, and sometimes, you may want to see the research for yourself. You can ask to be pointed to the research that shows the information you are trying to understand. That way, you have time to review it and wrap your mind around it before making a decision.



Village Tip: If she doesn't understand, but is afraid to ask, encourage her by saying, "Let's ask together." Sometimes knowing someone is by your side makes a big difference.

You Can Ask / Say:

- “Can you show me the research you are referring to?”
- “Please document that I am waiting for you to provide evidence based reasoning and research. Therefore, I am unable to make an informed decision at this time.”

Medication Minute

 Know the name of every medication you receive.

 Ask what it is being recommended for before taking it.

 Disclose all medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbs you use.

 Mention any allergies or previous reactions to the suggested medication.

 Before accepting a medication remind them if you are pregnant, nursing, or donating your milk.

 Labor Preparation: If you plan to request or accept medication during labor or postpartum, ask how it may affect you, your baby, labor progress, or breastfeeding.

 Know which effects are expected and which require immediate medical attention.

Remember to Use the B.R.A.I.N.E.D. Acronym to Help Guide You

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