

**High Blood Pressure in Pregnancy**

Pregnancy can be an exciting time with lots of changes happening to your body. It is important for you to understand what these changes are and how they affect the health of you and your baby.

**What is a placenta (afterbirth)?**

The placenta is a structure that develops in your uterus during pregnancy. The placenta provides oxygen and nutrients to your growing baby and removes waste products from your baby's blood. It attaches to the wall of your uterus, and connects to your baby through the umbilical cord.

**Why is a healthy placenta important?**

A poorly developed placenta will be unable to provide adequate nutrition to the baby. This can result in failure of the baby to achieve its full potential in both size and brain development. Small babies can occur in normal healthy pregnancies; however, a growth impaired small baby requires close monitoring to ensure a safe delivery.   
Inadequate placental development can also cause increased blood pressure for the mother during pregnancy, leading to harmful effects on both the mother and baby. This is known as **Pre-eclampsia.**

**Who is at risk for placental problems?**

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| **Factors from a prior pregnancy:** | **Factors in the current pregnancy:** |
| * Preeclampsia | * Nulliparity |
| * Placental Abruption | * Age 40+ years |
| * Placental Infarction | * Body Mass Index over 30kg/m2 |
| * Fetal Growth Restriction | * Chronic Hypertension |
| * Delivery before 37 weeks | * Pre Pregnancy Diabetes (Type 1 or 2) |
| * Still Birth | * Chronic Kidney Disease |
|  | * Systemic Lupus Erythematosus |
|  | * Assisted Reproduction |
|  | * Twin or Triplet Pregnancy |

**What can I do?**

* **If you have TWO or more of the above factors, it is recommended that you begin taking a daily low dose Aspirin (81 mg ASA) at bedtime starting between 10 to 16 weeks of pregnancy and continuing until 36 weeks. Starting this before 16 weeks is crucial.**
* Take a calcium supplement of 1000 mg daily, if you do not eat dairy products.

**DISCUSS THIS WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER**

*Adapted from Dr. M. Green, MD, FRCSC, FSOGC – Northumberland Hills Hospital and North York General Hospital*