
Pregnancy Induced Hypertension

PIH

Independent Childbirth

A Short Summary • Key Words: Metabolic Toxemia; Pre-eclampsia, HELLP; Hypertension • January 1, 2008



What is Pregnancy Induced Hypertension?

As your pregnancy advances, you make more blood, which can raise blood pressure; at the same time, hormones cause relaxation of the blood vessels, which can lower blood pressure. A unique trait your pregnant body can do!

If a reading is high before 20 weeks of pregnancy, you may be termed 'chronic'. After 20 weeks of pregnancy, it may indicate a pregnancy health condition. These fluctuations are normal and careproviders expect to see variations in your blood pressure during each trimester.

What's the Concern?

A high blood pressure reading is sometimes symptomatic of early stages of eclampsia which is a serious condition where your urine contains abnormal levels of protein, and you experience headaches, severe edema, dizziness and/or blurred vision. It can also be a first indication of HELLP, a serious condition where your liver is failing, which is a secondary symptom of toxemia.

What Do I Need to Know?

A blood pressure reading gives two numbers: the diastolic and the systolic. The systolic reading is the pressure in the arteries as the heart contracts; the diastolic reading is when the heart is relaxed. A systolic reading of 140 or higher, or a diastolic reading of 90 or higher is normally considered high blood pressure. However, pregnancy is a condition where knowledge of how the pregnant body differs from a non-pregnant state is vital to being comfortable with the fluctuations of blood pressure each trimester. Your lifestyle, eating habits, and usual baseline readings should be taken into account each time your blood pressure is taken.

A slightly elevated blood pressure reading late in pregnancy is not unusual and by itself is not a case for induction and/or cesarean. However you will need to learn to identify the other symptoms of eclampsia - as eclampsia and HELLP are serious conditions requiring professional medical health care - along with how to prevent basic complications with good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. Otherwise, if high blood pressure appears along with other symptoms of eclampsia, your provider is likely to consider inducing your labor or having a surgical birth immediately, if the situation is urgent.

Learn about eclampsia, pregnancy induced hypertension and induction in an independent childbirth education class now so you can identify when these options are appropriate for you specifically and have an informed discussion with your careprovider. You may find yourself in a discussion with your careprovider regarding elective induction at or immediately after your due date for a number of reasons if you experience a rise in blood pressure. Choose a healthy lifestyle that promotes a calm environment and keeps you nutritionally and physically healthy and low-risk.

Sources: American Heart Association; *Metabolic Toxemia of Late Pregnancy*, Brewer; *The Thinking Woman's Guide To A Better Birth*, Goer; Martn Watt, Medical Herbalist

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