

Listen2Baby

Monitoring Your Baby's Heartbeat During Labour



This leaflet is for pregnant women planning a vaginal birth. It explains why monitoring your baby's heartbeat is important during labour, what methods are used, how to choose what's best for you and what happens if there are concerns. Please speak to your midwife or doctor if you have questions.



[www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/
listen2baby](http://www.npeu.ox.ac.uk/listen2baby)

Listen2Baby

Why Monitor the Baby's Heartbeat?

Monitoring helps us check how your baby is coping with labour. Most babies are born safely, but listening to the heartbeat can alert us early to signs that your baby may need help.



What Are We Looking For?

We monitor the rate and pattern of your baby's heartbeat. A normal range is 110–160 beats per minute. Temporary changes are common during contractions, but some patterns may indicate your baby is not coping well with labour.

How Is the Heartbeat Monitored?

There are two options for monitoring your baby's heartbeat.

- Intermittent Auscultation (IA): The midwife will listen to and record the baby's heartbeat at regular intervals using a Pinard (stethoscope) or Sonicaid (handheld Doppler device). Used when labour is straightforward with no risk factors.
- Continuous Monitoring (CTG): A machine will continuously record your contractions and your baby's heartbeat. The machine is attached to a belt round your tummy or a small clip on the baby's head. Used when there are concerns or risk factors.

Your midwife will recommend the best method for you, but whatever is recommended the final choice is yours.



How Do I Choose?

What you are offered and what you choose will depend on:

- Your health and your baby's health
- Where you choose to give birth
- Your preferences for monitoring
- Policy and guidance where you are having your baby

Why Choose Intermittent Monitoring?

- You have had a straightforward pregnancy and want to keep things as natural as possible
- With intermittent monitoring you are less likely to have interventions in labour and birth.
- You can move around freely and use a birthing pool.
- Some women say that they find it reassuring while not being intrusive or disruptive to labour.



Why Choose Continuous Monitoring?

- You have had problems in pregnancy that make labour more risky
- You want the reassurance of continuous monitoring
- You don't mind not being able to move around freely and/or use a birthing pool



What if I Don't Want What's Recommended?

Your midwife or doctor will explain what is recommended and why, but the final choice is yours. You can always ask questions and change your mind.hospital's maternity website.



Further Information

- NICE Intrapartum Care (2017)
www.nice.org.uk
- Royal College of Midwives
www.rcm.org.uk
- Talk to your midwife or visit your hospital's maternity website.

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