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The Third Trimester: When To Call

Welcome to the third trimester! These final few months of pregnancy are an exciting time, as you make final preparations to meet the newest addition to your family. However, they also come with a few uncomfortable physical changes, and some uncertainty about what is considered normal. Keep this list handy, so you know when to call the physician on-call!

CONTRACTIONS

- Before 37 weeks, regular painful contractions may signal preterm labor. Stay off your feet and drink two to four glasses of water over one hour. If you continue to have regular painful contractions, please call us.
- After 37 weeks, you are full-term and an increase in frequency and intensity of contractions is normal. To distinguish between early/false contractions and true labor, follow the “5-1-1” rule. If you have painful contractions every 5 minutes, lasting 1 minute (60 seconds) each, consistently over the course of 1 hour, please call us. If it is your first baby, wait until you have consistent contractions for 2 full hours.

LEAKING FLUID

- Heavy nonodorous vaginal discharge and occasional leakage of urine are normal.
- If you have a large gush of clear water-like fluid, followed by a constant slow trickle (that is *not* discharge and does *not* smell like urine), please call us.

VAGINAL BLEEDING

- Before 37 weeks, please call us if you have any bleeding.
- After 37 weeks, some spotting is normal, especially after sex, exercise, and exams by a physician. If you are bleeding similar to a menstrual cycle, or enough to put on a pad, please call us.

FETAL MOVEMENT and KICK COUNTS

- You will notice changes in the vigor and pattern of your baby’s movements as he/she runs out of room and starts to enter a newborn sleep-wake cycle. However, even with these variations, the overall frequency of movements should remain about the same on a day-to-day basis.
- You do not need to do “kick counts” daily. However, if you have concerns about decreased movement, follow the “count to 10” rule. Drink a glass of juice or sugary soda, lay down in a quiet room, and focus on counting any and all movements over the next 1 hour. If you are not able to count to 10 movements during that timeframe, please call us.

MUCUS PLUG

- This gelatin-like substance can be clear, white, yellow, pink, brown, or bloody, and it covers the cervix during pregnancy to protect your baby from harmful bacteria. Women usually “pass a mucus plug” after 37 weeks; sometimes, they may even pass one plug and then create and pass another. Or, they may not pass one at all.
- While passing a mucus plug does suggest your cervix may be preparing for labor, it does not necessarily mean that labor is imminent. In fact, delivery may still be hours, days, or even weeks away. For this reason, passing a mucus plug is NOT a reason to call the on-call physician, unless you are also having one or more of the other symptoms above.

Please call the office at (404) 352-3656 during business hours according to the instructions above, or if you have any other concerns that cannot wait until your next appointment. For urgent after-hours concerns, please call the answering service at (770) 429-2690 to reach the on-call physician.