



### Who says life is fair?

Your baby is growing slower or the water around your baby is less than expected. The water is also called amniotic fluid. This was not what you planned but **help is at hand**.

This pamphlet will answer some of your questions. It will help you understand how your Home Care Nursing Team, together with your doctor, are planning to keep you and your baby safe and healthy without you leaving the comfort of your home.



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## What is “placental function”?

The placenta is an amazing organ. It:

- ✿ Helps your baby grow by allowing glucose, proteins, calcium and iron to pass from your blood into your baby’s blood.
- ✿ Acts as the baby’s lungs. Oxygen passes from your blood to your baby, and carbon dioxide passes from the baby back to your blood.
- ✿ Makes hormones that alter your body so that you can nurture your baby well and prepares your body for birth and breast feeding. These hormones are called Human Placental Lactogen, Progesterone and Estrogen.
- ✿ Protects the baby from some harmful germs. However viruses can cross to the baby and so can some drugs including alcohol.

## What does it mean if “placental function is reduced”?

This is when the placenta takes in nutrients from the mother more slowly. As a result, your baby’s growth is slower. This is called intrauterine growth restriction (or IUGR). Sometimes there is less fluid around the baby. This is called oligohydramnios.

Babies can do very well even if their placenta isn’t working at full capacity. This is called a margin of safety. The placenta has a 50% margin of safety.

## Why me?

Reduced placenta function affects probably 6-15 out of every 100 babies. Usually we do not know why. It may be:

- ✿ That your placenta has embedded in a less nutritious area of the uterus.
- ✿ That your baby’s gene for placental development is not as well developed.
- ✿ That you are carrying more than one baby!
- ✿ That you:
  - ◆ are highly stressed.
  - ◆ are not eating well.
  - ◆ are smoking.
  - ◆ have high blood pressure.

## What does this mean for my baby?

Babies have some good ways to cope with these situations. First, babies make sure that their head and heart get the nutrients they need. However, this may mean that they have fewer “stores” to help them cope with labour. Your doctor may suggest an earlier birth if your baby shows a very reduced growth.

After birth your baby may need extra warmth and feeding often until he or she builds up some fat stores.

## What can be done?

What you do can help a lot. All treatment is aimed at helping your body deliver as much nutrient rich blood to your uterus as possible by:

- ✿ Reducing stress
- ✿ Eating healthy foods
- ✿ Drinking plenty of water
- ✿ Stopping smoking
- ✿ Lowering high blood pressure

## How do I help my body deliver “nutrient rich” blood?

### Learn what makes you feel stressed.

Reducing stress can improve blood flow to your uterus. Start by looking at your own “busyness”. Decide what part of that “busyness” causes you stress. Can you “let it go” and have more quiet times in your life?

### Commit yourself to Rest Therapy

Get off your feet and stop running around! Your nurse will help you decide how much “rest therapy” is needed and how to include your family and friends to help you. When resting either sit with your feet up or lie on your side. Do not lie flat on your back.

### Eat healthy meals

Include whole grain foods, fruits and vegetables.

### Drink plenty of fluids 6 to 8 glasses every day

To have the fluid in your system to help the blood flow to your uterus.

### Stop smoking

Nicotine can narrow the small blood vessels in your uterus. Also some of your red blood cells won't be able to carry oxygen in the usual way.

### Get plenty of sleep

Make sure that you get 8 to 9 hours sleep in 24 hours. Help yourself sleep well by:

- \* Not drinking coffee or having drinks with caffeine after 6:00 pm
- \* Make sure you have plenty of pillows for your legs and tummy so you can get comfortable



## How do I know that my baby is coping?

### Get to know your baby

This is a time when your baby is making memories and developing personality. Your baby enjoys stroking, and a regular daily routine. You will be able to notice when your baby is asleep, awake, and discover your baby's daily rhythm.

### \* Read the “Baby Movement Counting” pamphlet

### \* Know the warning signs

If you feel less than 6 movements in 2 hours call Antepartum Home Care between 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. If this happens after 4:30 pm call your doctor.

### Fetal Heart Rate Messages\*

Your baby gives messages about how he or she is doing through heart rate changes. When your nurse visits you, she will listen to and see these messages using a fetal heart rate monitor. This machine records the heart beat on a slow moving graph paper. Two small plastic discs are put on your belly. One disc records your baby's heart rate. The other disc records the contractions. Your nurse will watch your baby during sleep time and when awake. The recording will take from 20 minutes to one hour.

## Ultrasound Scan\*

“Filming” your baby with high frequency sound waves can:

- ✿ Show how your baby is growing
- ✿ Estimate the amount of fluid still around the baby\*.
- ✿ Measure your baby’s blood flow to the placenta. This is called Doppler Flow.

*\* These procedures are painless and there are no known risks.*

## What about contractions? Will they upset the baby?

It is normal for your uterus to have some irregular contractions throughout pregnancy. They help tone the uterine muscle for labour and prepares your baby for labour. Your baby will hardly feel the difference. However, contractions that happen every ten minutes or less might have more impact as your baby has a lower coping ability. If this happens, your baby will need a fetal heart assessment by your nurse or doctor.

## How can I tell if my uterus is contracting?

It is often hard to tell the difference between your baby moving and your uterus contracting. Many women do it this way:

- ✿ Get comfortable, place the palm of your hands over top of your uterus. Keep them there. When your uterus contracts you will feel your belly become firm and slowly push into your hands and then as the contraction goes away your belly will slowly become soft and return to its former shape.
- ✿ **Counting the contractions.** Note the time, when one contraction starts and again when the next one starts.

## Know the warning signs

- ✿ If you feel the contractions every 10 minutes or more often (6 or more in one hour) see the back page for what to do next.
- ✿ Discomfort or pain felt in the back or lower belly. It may feel like menstrual cramps. It may be constant or come and go.
- ✿ Bowel cramping. If you feel this you may or may not have diarrhea.
- ✿ Belly pain.

## What will my nurse do?

- ✿ Help me understand the special needs of my pregnancy and how to check for:
  - ▶ contractions
  - ▶ baby movements
- ✿ Assess me and my baby for signs of health.
- ✿ Help me with my self care diary.
- ✿ Visit me two or three times a week. Visit to be about 1 hour.
- ✿ Phone me on non visit days.
- ✿ Report to my doctor when needed.
- ✿ Answer my questions about pregnancy, labour and birth.

## Questions I have...

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## What do I need to do every day to help myself and my baby?

- \* Relax and let go. Focus on my goals.
- \* Create a calm space.
- \* Eat healthy meals.
- \* Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water or other fluids.
- \* Cut down or stop smoking (if I do!).
- \* Make sure I get the rest therapy suggested.
- \* Have quality time with the baby.
- \* Fill in my self care diary.
  - ▶ Do my baby movement count.
- \* Check for signs of early labour.
  - ▶ Do my “hands on” exercise for contractions.
- \* Visit my doctor in the office when scheduled.
- \* Visit the ultrasound department when scheduled.

## What should I ask my family and friends to do?

- \* Housework \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Shopping \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Cooking \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Laundry \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Look after the other children  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \* Look after pets \_\_\_\_\_
- \* Have patience and love me!



## When do I need to call for help?

If you develop **any** of the following symptoms, contact your home care nurse right away. If you call during office hours and your nurse does not return your call in 15 minutes, call your doctor.

- Less than 6 baby movements in two hours
- Contractions every 10 minutes or more often
- Gush or trickle of fluid from the vagina
- Pain in your belly

### Call 911, and be taken to the hospital by ambulance if you have:

- Vaginal bleeding like a menstrual period

### How to contact the Antepartum Home Care Program between 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

**Office:** 604-875-3557

If you need to speak to us right away, leave an urgent message after the tone.

- state your name and phone number
- Press the number sign,#, then 701. We will get the message right away.

### Paging 604-875-2161

- Ask for the “Antepartum Home Care Nurse” pager 02445
- Stay on line or leave your telephone number with the operator

### After 4:30 pm and before 8:30 am

**Call your doctor or midwife:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Or call the BC Women’s Assessment Room at 604-875-3070**

*Pamphlet Developed by:*  
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