

I AM PREGNANT

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Nomabelu was very worried. She was alone at home. Her neighbours were in their room next door. She did not want to trouble them. But what should she do. The pain was getting worse. She had not felt so much pain before in her life. It was not yet her time. She still had three more months to go before the baby was due. She held her back. She bent over. The pain still would not stop.

Most pregnancies are normal. In most pregnancies we will feel normal aches and pains. These are just part of being pregnant. But there are some aches and pains that are danger signs telling us that there is something wrong. Nomabello has a bad pain. How will she know if this pain is a danger sign telling her to rush to the clinic or doctor? It is not always easy to tell. If you are not sure ask the clinic or doctor anyway. It is your right.

Is it a danger sign if you bleed when you are pregnant?

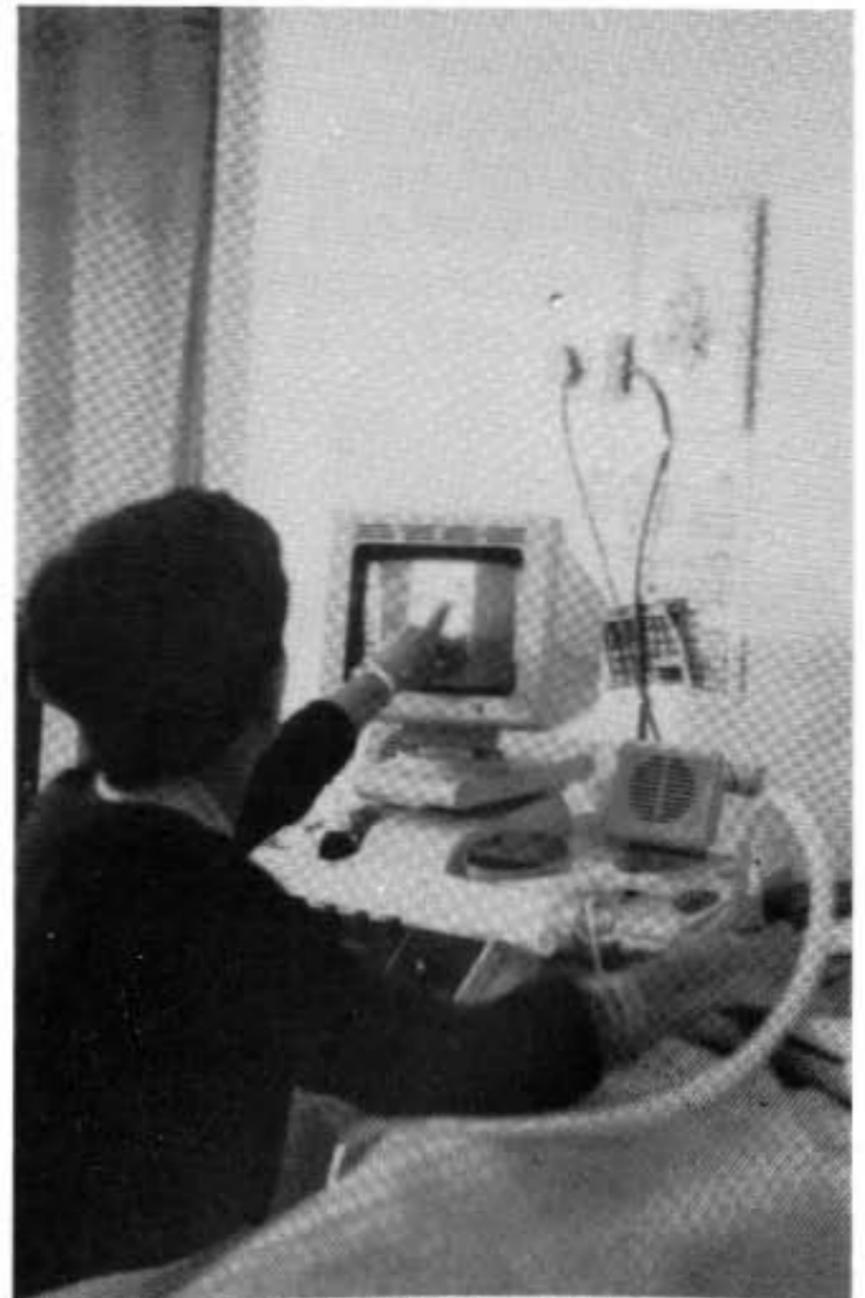
A small amount of bleeding early in pregnancy can be normal. Sometimes a woman may bleed a little when there should have been a period. There may be bleeding because the fertilised egg pushes into the lining of the womb and the baby begins to grow there. But bleeding after this time may be a sign of miscarriage. Heavy bleeding, or bleeding with pain are both bad signs. If this happens you should go straight to the clinic or doctor.

Sometimes the bleeding stops and the pregnancy continues like a normal pregnancy. No harm has been done to the

growing baby by this bleeding. But sometimes the pregnancy is lost. You will need to have the inside of your womb scraped to make sure nothing stays behind. This operation is called a D and C. You need an anaesthetic which puts you to sleep. The operation is done through the opening of the womb so you are not cut inside. Wait until your next period before you try to fall pregnant again.

Bleeding in late pregnancy can happen from many problems. But they are all serious.

The afterbirth may be too low. Bleeding may start if the afterbirth is too low in the womb. The afterbirth (placenta) passes food from the mother's blood to the baby's blood inside the womb. If the clinic



The ultrasound machine shows a picture of the baby growing inside the mother's womb.

has an ultrasound machine the doctor can tell if the afterbirth is too low by looking at a picture of the womb shown through this machine. For this picture to be made a jelly-like cream is put on your stomach. Then a metal instrument is passed over your stomach. And this makes a picture of your womb show on a screen that is like a television screen. This picture shows the doctor where the afterbirth lies. If the afterbirth covers the opening of the womb completely you may need to spend the rest of your pregnancy in hospital. This is because even though the bleeding may stop for a while, you may start to bleed heavily again at any time. This also means that you will need a caesarian section operation to deliver the baby. This problem is called placenta proevia.

The afterbirth may tear away.

Another thing that could cause bleeding is if the afterbirth tears away from the wall of the womb. This is called abruption. You feel bad pain and often bleed heavily.

Sometimes you just have a bad pain and the blood stays inside the womb. When these things happen the baby's life and the mother's life are in danger. So if you have bad pain or heavy bleeding you must get to the hospital quickly.

Sores may cause bleeding.

Another thing that causes bleeding is sores or infection on the opening of the womb, or inside the vagina. This is not as serious as the other causes already mentioned but you must see the doctor or clinic when this happens.

Is it a danger sign if you have bad pain over your womb?

Your baby may be early.

Usually pain over the womb means that you are in labour. Labour pains come and go. They slowly get worse. Remember that many women have their babies early. These babies are called premature. So, if you do not think your time has come but you have this kind of pain, be careful. You may be having a premature baby. Get to the clinic or hospital quickly.

You may have an infection in your urine. Pain in different parts of your stomach can be caused by infection in your urine (wee). You may feel the pain low down over your bladder, or on both sides of your lower back, over your kidneys. You may feel hot and shivery, and may vomit. It may burn when you wee. If you have a bad infection in your kidneys, you may need to be in hospital and get medicines through a drip. If you go to the clinic or doctor early you will be treated early and will get better quickly.

Pain over the womb is also caused if the afterbirth tears away from the wall of the womb. We talked about this with bleeding.



Babies that are born too early need special care in an incubator.

Is it a danger sign if you get bad swelling in your hands, feet, or face?

You may get a little swelling of the hands and feet at the end of your pregnancy. Your shoes feel a bit tight, especially by the end of the day. The rings on your fingers feel a bit tight. This is quite normal in pregnancy.



If your eyes and face are very swollen and your blood pressure is high you will need bed rest in hospital



.....and medicines through a drip.

But if there is a lot of swelling you must go to the clinic or doctor. You will know if there is a lot of swelling when your shoes don't fit. When your rings get stuck on your fingers. When your face and eyes become swollen. You may also get very bad headaches and you may not be able to see clearly. The doctor will check your blood pressure and urine (wee). If your blood pressure is high and if you have protein in your urine, you have preeclampsia. This is a serious thing. It could lead to losing the baby and to the mother having a fit and maybe also dying. It must be treated in hospital with bed rest and medicine in drips. If it is treated early then you and your baby will be safe.

Is it a danger sign if the baby is not kicking much?

A healthy baby moves and wriggles in the womb. You will feel small flutters and sometimes big kicks. These usually start in the fifth month of pregnancy. As the baby

grows you can even see the baby moving when you look at your stomach. Slower movements could mean that something is wrong. Babies often move more at different times of the day. Watch how your baby is moving. Get used to how it kicks every day.

Then you will know if the kicking becomes less. If this happens go to the clinic or doctor straight away. The clinic will check the baby's heart with a stethoscope or do an ultrasound. They can also put a belt around your stomach and keep a check of the baby's heart beat for half an hour. If there is a problem it is best to deliver the baby as it is safer for the baby to be out of the womb.

But remember babies are different. Some play netball in your womb while others are lazy. So if you have a lazy baby don't worry. It is only if your baby's movements get less than they used to be that you need worry.

Is it important to get injections for syphilis?

Syphilis is a disease that gets passed on during sex if the man or the woman is carrying the syphilis germ. If you have syphilis the syphilis germs can pass between you and your baby. Then the baby may be born very sick. And the baby may even die. The doctor will be able to tell if you have syphilis from a blood test. This is one of the reasons to book early at the clinic when you are pregnant. If syphilis is found early it is easier to treat. You will need three penicillin injections. Make sure you get all three. And get your husband or boyfriend treated too. If he is not treated he will just give the disease back to you. It is always important to be treated for syphilis but it is even more important when you are pregnant

Is it a danger sign if your waters break?

The baby inside your womb is floating in water. The water gives the baby room to move and to grow. It stops the baby being hurt if your stomach is hit. When you are in labour the bag of water often bursts. Sometimes a lot of water rushes out of your vagina. Sometimes it leaks out slowly. If the water breaks when you are not in labour it can be dangerous. Germs from outside your body can get inside your womb, and this

can give you and your baby a bad infection. So if water starts to come from your vagina, in a rush, or slowly, and you are not in the clinic or hospital, don't wait. Go straight to the clinic or doctor for a check up.



The nurse listens to the baby's heart beat

Ask if you are not sure.

Remember these problems don't happen often. But if you are ever worried about anything in your pregnancy go to the clinic. Ask the doctor or sister. Don't wait until it is too late. We want healthy babies and healthy mothers. It is our right.



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