

Pregnancy Over 35

Adapted from www.marchofdimas.com

First of all You ARE NOT OLD! However your eggs are. Consider this, a woman's ovaries contain all the eggs that she will ever have at birth. Over time eggs are utilized or die but none are produced. A man makes sperm every day. Now your 35 year old egg compared to his day old sperm is old, but You ARE NOT OLD.

What you need to know:

Most healthy women from age 35 into their 40s have healthy pregnancies. If problems do arise, they can usually be successfully treated.

Women over age 35 have an increased risk of:

- Fertility problems
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Multiple pregnancy (twins or more)
- Miscarriage
- Placenta previa, a condition in which the placenta is in the wrong place and covers the cervix
- Cesarean section
- A baby with a genetic disorder

Because of these increased risks for women over 35, prenatal care is especially important.

What you can do:

No matter what your age, see your health care provider before trying to get pregnant. This is especially important if you:

- Have a chronic medical condition, such as diabetes, a seizure disorder or high blood pressure
- Are on long-term medication

If not under control, some medical conditions can cause risks for you and your baby.

If you are older than 35 and don't get pregnant after trying for six months, see your health care provider.

A Mommy After 35

Most healthy women from age 35 into their 40s have healthy pregnancies. Most women over 35 are in good health. Good prenatal care and healthy habits can help you reduce certain risks. If problems do arise for women over 35, they can usually be successfully treated.

No matter what your age, see your health care provider before trying to get pregnant and:

- • Have a chronic medical condition, such as diabetes, a seizure disorder or high blood pressure
- • Are on long-term medication

If not under control, some medical conditions can cause risks for you and your baby.

If you are older than 35 and don't get pregnant after trying for six months, see your health care provider. Older women may find it harder to get pregnant than younger women because fertility declines with age. In many cases, infertility can be treated.

Prenatal Care Is Important

Prenatal care is especially important for women over 35 because:

- They're more likely to get high blood pressure and diabetes for the first time during pregnancy.
- They're at increased risk of having a baby with a genetic disorder like Down syndrome, a combination of mental retardation and physical defects.

Women over 35 have a slightly increased risk of the following complications during pregnancy:

- Miscarriage: For women at age 40, the risk is about 25 percent.
- Placenta Previa where the placenta is in the wrong position and covers the cervix: This can cause excessive bleeding during delivery. Often a cesarean section is needed.
- Fetal distress and prolonged labor if this is a woman's first pregnancy.
- A low birthweight baby (less than 5-½ pounds) or a preterm birth (less than 37 weeks of pregnancy): One way to reduce these risks is to not smoke during your pregnancy.

Women over 35 have a greater chance of having a cesarean delivery than do other women.

Healthy Habits

To help reduce risks during pregnancy:

- Eat healthy foods.
- Gain a healthy amount of weight.
- Exercise, with your health care provider's guidance.
- Don't drink alcohol, smoke or take illegal drugs.
- Don't take any medications or herbal supplements without first checking with your health care provider.

Prenatal Screening Tests

Ask your provider about prenatal screening tests for the baby. For instance, amniocentesis is often recommended for pregnant women 35 or older.

In amniocentesis, the health care provider inserts a thin needle through the woman's abdomen. A small amount of amniotic fluid (the fluid that surrounds and protects the baby) is removed and tested for chromosomal abnormalities such as Down syndrome or a specific genetic disorder for which the fetus is

at risk. Test results are usually available within a week or two. Most women who have prenatal screening tests learn that the baby is healthy and feel reassured by the results.