

Fetal Monitoring

Fetal monitoring is a technique used to track the pattern of uterine contractions and the pattern of the baby's heartbeat. This type of monitoring is usually done during labor . Fetal monitoring allows your doctor to detect certain problems with labor and delivery. If such problems develop, the baby can usually be delivered by cesarean section to prevent birth complications.

Not all women are monitored during labor. If you have certain pregnancy complications (such as high blood pressure) or other problems during labor, you may need fetal monitoring.

If you have an epidural, the hospital staff will monitor your blood pressure through delivery. Monitoring does not necessarily indicate that there is a problem, but is usually precautionary measure to ensure a healthy delivery.

Fetal monitoring is performed in the hospital, with external or internal monitors. The external monitors are on two belts fastened around your waist. The internal monitors are placed gently into the vagina and uterus next to the baby and onto the skin of the baby's scalp. Generally, monitoring is safe.

Another type of monitoring performed before labor is called a nonstress test - doctors perform nonstress tests while the mother is at rest. An additional test in this category is the oxytocin challenge test, where an IV delivers oxytocin into the mother's bloodstream to induce uterine contractions. If the test results are normal, the doctor will usually repeat the test until delivery.

If any of the fetal monitoring test are abnormal, your doctor will probably want to deliver the baby quickly, which may sometimes mean having a cesarean section.