



Placenta Previa

What is placenta previa?

Placenta previa is a condition that occurs during pregnancy when the placenta (the sac surrounding the fetus) implants in the lower part of the uterus and blocks the cervical opening to the vagina, therefore preventing normal delivery.

What causes placenta previa?

It is not certain what causes placenta previa in every case. However, the following may contribute or actually cause placenta previa:

- Scarring from a prior uterine surgery
- A large or abnormally shaped placenta
- Multiple fetus' (twins or more)
- Multiple prior deliveries (6 or more previous deliveries)
- Scar tissue from previous C-section

Is there anything I can do to prevent placenta previa?

Currently, nothing is known to prevent placenta previa.

What are the signs and symptoms of placenta previa?

Some of the visible symptoms are:

- Vaginal Bleeding: loss of large quantities of blood during the third trimester; onset is very sudden and often painless.
- Cramping and labor

What can be done for placenta previa?

The treatment options depend upon the stage of pregnancy, the position of the baby and placenta, the amount of blood loss, degree of fetal distress and the presence or absence of labor.

Most of the time you will be asked to refrain from sexual relations. If you have questions on whether this applies to you- ask! Otherwise, assume no sexual relations for the duration.

The onset of severe symptoms before the 36th week of pregnancy will prompt the physician to extend the pregnancy as long as possible. The doctor may order blood transfusions to replace lost blood and administer medications and bedrest to halt labor and delivery.

After the 36th week, most doctors will determine how long delivery can be safely postponed and then deliver the baby by C-section at a hospital with a special high-risk delivery center. Infant mortality rate is higher compared to mothers without placenta previa. The higher rate is largely due to the premature births.

What kind of complications could I experience from placenta previa?

It is important to call your health care provider anytime you experience any of the symptoms listed above, especially if you are experiencing vaginal bleeding. If gone undetected, placenta previa can cause major bleeding that can lead to shock and death.