

Fetal Monitoring Information Sheet

Fetal Monitoring is used to observe your baby's heart rate (or level of stress) during labour. Labour can be a time of stress for your baby. With each contraction, there is a temporary decrease in the amount of oxygen the baby receives.

Most babies go through labour without any problems, but there are some babies that cannot deal with the stress and can have quite serious issues. It is for this reason that it is important to monitor the baby's heart rate during labour. Techniques have been developed to help the midwives/doctors decide which babies are able to manage the stress and which are having some difficulties that require intervention. Years of research have gone into developing these techniques.

Intermittent Auscultation:

Intermittent Auscultation is where a nurse or midwife will listen to your baby every 15- 30 minutes during the first part of labour and every five minutes while pushing. The nurse/midwife will wait for a labour pain and then listen to the baby's heart for about a minute. They will listen to the rate of the baby's heart and whether or not they hear increases or decreases in the heart rate.

Intermittent Auscultation allows for you to be able to walk around more, and if desired, take a shower/bath for pain relief. This technique also has shown to decrease the risks of interventions such as vacuum, forceps and caesarean sections.

For patients who have a low risk pregnancy, **Intermittent Auscultation** has been proven to have the same results for babies as if the nurse/midwife was to be listening non-stop.

Continuous Monitoring

Continuous Monitoring is a constant checking of the baby's heart rate through the use of a monitoring device. For most cases, a monitor is strapped around your belly (with a belt or a mesh band) which tracks the baby's heart rate at all times. If there are problems showing the heart rate or if the baby's heart rate is decreasing, an internal monitor may be used (a thin wire placed on the top of the baby's head). The internal monitor can increase the chance of infection, so is only used when necessary.

Continuous Monitoring is recommended for patients who have a pregnancy with certain complications and may have a baby less likely to be able to handle the stresses of labour.