



## All mothers-to-be should be aware of preeclampsia

By Dr. Lee B. Padove

One of the biggest challenges of preeclampsia during pregnancy is detecting this nuanced disorder. That's because, sometimes, preeclampsia can show no obvious symptoms. A prenatal lab examination can detect elevated urine protein levels, an indication of preeclampsia. Other symptoms can include severe headaches, vision changes, swelling, severe breathing issues and even seizures (eclampsia). Early symptom detection is important to improving the odds of a safe pregnancy. When suspicion of preeclampsia exists, a thorough evaluation may include hospitalization, so health care providers can more closely monitor the mother, baby and placenta. The treatment for preeclampsia is the baby's delivery. If only mild preeclampsia exists and both baby and mother are doing well, delivery ideally will be after 37

weeks. If there is a threat to either the baby's health or mother's life, delivery is scheduled earlier.

However, the effects of preeclampsia do not necessarily end after pregnancy. Women who have had preeclampsia during pregnancy have a higher risk post-delivery for developing blood pressure problems, high cholesterol, diabetes, along with stroke and heart disease. Women who experienced preeclampsia during pregnancy are at nearly double the risk for heart disease or stroke in the subsequent

five-to-15 years. Women who have had severe preeclampsia may have a greater than six-fold risk. It is important that women who've experienced preeclampsia embark on a healthy lifestyle path and follow preventive measures along with continued screening for diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and premature heart disease. For recommendations specific to you, continue regular checkups with your primary care physician or cardiologist.

Dr. Lee B. Padove is a board certified cardiologist at Northside Hospital, whose special interests include cardiac evaluation and treatment during pregnancy. Northside Hospital's Maternal Heart Health Clinic educates women about their risk factors and screens them to detect the early development of cardiovascular disease before it progresses. For more information, visit [northside.com/maternityresources](http://northside.com/maternityresources).

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