

# Pregnancy After Age 35: What are the Risks?



Women experiencing pregnancy after the age of 35 are known as being of “advanced maternal age.” That term alone is enough to make those who fall into that category feel like some sort of modern-day anomaly.

While advanced maternal age does mean that the pregnancy is considered higher-risk, being pregnant later in life is much more common than you think. The reality is that many women are starting to delay their pregnancies until they’re well into their 30s and 40s. And the good news is that the majority of these women will give birth with little to no complications, and have perfectly healthy babies.

Pregnancy later in life does carry more risks, but it’s important to understand that there’s nothing vastly different about you when you’re older. When medical professionals talk about the risks of pregnancy beyond age 35, they simply mean the risks that ALL pregnant women face increases with age. You are by no means guaranteed to experience problems beyond age 35.

Let us take a look at the risks and complications you can experience with pregnancy at age 35 and over.

## Trying to Get Pregnant After 35

Women are born with a set amount of eggs in their ovaries. As they age, both the quantity and quality of these eggs start to diminish, which can make trying to conceive more difficult.

[One study](#) found that women aged 19-26 years old had around a 50% chance of conceiving on their most fertile day of the month. For women aged 27-34, it was around 40%, and for women aged 35 to 39, they had just under 30% chance of conceiving.

What you also might not be aware of, is that your partner's age might also play a role in your ability to conceive. Men who are in their 40's have an increase in random genetic mutations in their sperm that can further complicate things.

## Complications with Late Pregnancy

Before reading on, try and remember that the majority of pregnant women aged 35 and older have uneventful pregnancies and healthy babies. While there are some increased risks that come with age, the chances are still relatively low. Some of the risks include:

### Increased Risk of Pre-eclampsia

Pre-eclampsia can occur after 20 weeks of pregnancy, and sometimes up to 6 weeks after delivery. There is a wide range of symptoms associated with this condition and some women experience no symptoms at all. A woman may be considered to have the condition if they display signs of new-onset hypertension (high blood pressure) or proteinuria (higher levels of protein in your urine.) In addition to being over the age of 35, there are several other risk factors for preeclampsia. They include first pregnancies, diabetes, obesity, and being pregnant with more than one baby (multiples.)

# Genetic & Congenital Abnormalities

A mother over the age of 35 will have an increased chance of having a baby with congenital abnormalities such as Down Syndrome. At age 25 the rate is around 1 in 1,064 but by age 35 it's around 1 in 240.

Pregnant women who are of advanced maternal age should receive information about the genetic risks associated with pregnancy as part of standard prenatal care. Additionally, your healthcare provider should educate you with any tests available such as an amniocentesis procedure, that can help diagnose any abnormalities during your pregnancy.

## Miscarriages

Around one-half of miscarriages are due to [congenital abnormalities](#) and because congenital abnormalities are more prevalent in later pregnancies, there is also an increased chance of early miscarriages. There is also an increased risk of later miscarriages and stillbirths, with the rate rising significantly beyond age 37.

Statistically, women who are between the ages of 35-45 have a 20-35% chance of miscarriage. This is about a 10% increase overall compared to the chances of having a miscarriage in general for women younger than 35.

## Placenta Problems

Placenta previa is a fairly rare condition where the placenta covers all or part of your cervix which can lead to complications such as excessive bleeding during delivery. It only affects around 0.5% of pregnancies, but if you're 40 or older, you're three times more likely to have placenta problems than younger women. Still, the chances of this are relatively low.

## Increased Risk of Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes is a condition where you have higher than normal blood sugar levels during pregnancy. It usually occurs in the third trimesters and will usually disappear after birth. Gestational diabetes can be frustrating to manage during pregnancy, but it can also increase your chances of [developing type 2 diabetes](#) later on in life. The good news is that when detected early enough, there is little risk of complications.

## Other Possible Risks

- High blood pressure
-  Increased chance to be pregnant with multiples (twins, triplets), which come with their own set of complications.
- Premature birth
- Low birthweight

## The Odds Are In Your Favor

If you're planning on getting pregnant after the age of 35, be sure to speak with your healthcare provider before trying to conceive. If you're currently pregnant, just try to maintain a healthy pregnancy by eating right, exercising, and taking a prenatal vitamin.

The good news is that despite these elevated risks, the majority of women over the age of 35 have healthy and normal pregnancies and give birth to healthy children.