

# How to increase amniotic fluid

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Amniotic fluid supports a developing fetus in the womb during pregnancy. Sometimes, levels of this fluid are too low, but a person can increase these by taking certain steps.

The right levels of [amniotic fluid](#) are essential as the fluid helps to protect a fetus, as well as to regulate the surrounding temperature.

Amniotic fluid also helps prevent any squeezing of the umbilical cord, which might otherwise cut off food and oxygen to the fetus.

We look at how to increase amniotic fluid during pregnancy, as well as the risks of very high or low levels.

## Increasing amniotic fluid levels

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Amniotic fluid levels vary throughout the different stages of pregnancy.

During weeks 32–34, the amniotic fluid volume may increase to [800 milliliters \(ml\)](#) or more. From 34 weeks through to labor, the fluid decreases to about [400 ml](#).

Doctors use a scale called the amniotic fluid index (AFI) to check healthy levels of amniotic fluid.

AFI measurements are in centimeters (cm). A typical AFI score is 5–25 cm. An AFI score lower than 5 cm is too low, and doctors refer to this as oligohydramnios.

If a pregnant woman has low levels of amniotic fluid, they can work with their healthcare team to remedy the situation.

In some cases, drinking more water may help to increase levels. In other instances, a doctor may recommend medical treatments.

A doctor will also suggest more frequent checkups to carefully monitor amniotic fluid levels and ensure treatment is effective.

Some suggestions for how to increase amniotic fluid levels include:

## Increasing water intake

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If women have slightly lower than usual levels of amniotic fluid, they may be able to increase their levels by drinking more water.

An older 2002 review looked at four studies of 122 pregnant women. It found that women who increased their water intake, by roughly 2 liters over 2 hours, or had intravenous fluid, increased their levels of amniotic fluid.

Researchers need further evidence to know if increasing amniotic fluid in this way improves the health of the fetus.

## Supplementation

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A 2016 study examined the use of L-arginine supplementation to treat oligohydramnios when amniotic fluid levels are very low.

In the study, 100 pregnant women with a diagnosis of oligohydramnios took 3-gram sachets of L-arginine, three times a day until an increase in amniotic fluid levels occurred.

The study concluded that L-arginine may help treat oligohydramnios by increasing amniotic fluid levels. The benefits include lengthening the pregnancy duration and decreasing the risk of complications.

## Rest

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A doctor may advise more bed rest and decreasing physical activity for women with low amniotic fluid levels.

## Amnioinfusion

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A doctor may treat low levels of amniotic fluid with a process called amnioinfusion.

For this treatment, the doctor will introduce a saline solution via the cervix into the amniotic sac to increase fluid levels.

## Early delivery

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If amniotic fluid drops too low during the final stages of pregnancy, doctors may suggest early labor. Bringing labor forward can help to prevent any potential complications during delivery.

Thorough prenatal care can help to ensure the premature baby is healthy.

## High or low levels of amniotic fluids

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While oligohydramnios occurs when a woman has very low levels of amniotic fluid, polyhydramnios is when the fluid levels are extremely high.

Both conditions can cause complications:

## Oligohydramnios

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Oligohydramnios is a condition where a pregnant woman has too little amniotic fluid. Symptoms and signs of oligohydramnios include:

- fluid leaking from the vagina
- the woman not gaining enough weight
- the fetus not growing as fast as normal
- an ultrasound shows low levels of amniotic fluid
- the uterus is too small for the pregnancy stage

Doctors do not always know what causes oligohydramnios. However, some causes include:

- preexisting health conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes
- certain medications, such as high blood pressure drugs
- post-term pregnancy continuing 2 or more weeks past the due date
- congenital disabilities
- the amniotic sac breaking after 37 weeks but before labor
- pregnancy with identical twins that share a placenta

Oligohydramnios is most common in the last 3 months of pregnancy, known as the third trimester.

## Polyhydramnios

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Polyhydramnios, or hydramnios, is when levels of amniotic fluid are too high. Hydramnios happens if there are problems with amniotic fluid leaving the body, or if the body is creating too much of it.

If a pregnant woman has diabetes, this can cause polyhydramnios.

Other causes are due to the developing fetus.

Hydramnios may happen if a fetus has any of the following:

- central nervous system or chromosome issues affecting swallowing
- heart failure
- infection
- digestive problems, which can cause a blockage in fluid
- congenital disabilities

Polyhydramnios can also occur when identical twins share a placenta.

Symptoms of polyhydramnios include:

- unusually fast uterus growth or large uterus for pregnancy stage
- discomfort in the stomach
- contractions

Untreated polyhydramnios can cause complications for the pregnant woman and the developing fetus. These complications can include early labor or congenital disabilities.

Treatment will depend on the cause and severity of the condition. Options include:

- careful monitoring of amniotic fluid levels
- inserting a needle into the amniotic sac to remove fluid
- medication to reduce the fetus's urine output, which adds to amniotic fluid
- early delivery if necessary

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## When to see a doctor

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Women should see their doctor if they notice any symptoms of high or low amniotic fluid levels.

A doctor will take a medical history to check for any preexisting conditions and carry out a physical examination. A doctor will use ultrasounds and measure amounts of amniotic fluid to check levels.

Once a doctor has checked levels and found any possible causes, they can decide on the best treatment options.

If a pregnant woman has low levels of amniotic fluid towards the end of a healthy pregnancy, they may not need any treatment. A doctor may just carry out additional monitoring to keep a closer eye on levels, including more frequent ultrasounds.

## Summary

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Correct levels of amniotic fluid are necessary for keeping a developing fetus safe and healthy.

If a pregnant woman has a lower level of amniotic fluid than usual, they or their healthcare team can remedy this. Drinking more water is a simple way of increasing amniotic fluid while resting and decreasing physical exercise may also help.

In other cases, an individual may need medical treatment. Interventions can include intravenous fluids to increase hydration, or directly inserting a saline solution into the amniotic sac to increase fluids.

If people have any symptoms of low or high amniotic fluid levels, they should arrange a checkup with their healthcare team.

Ultrasounds can help to check amniotic fluid levels, and close monitoring and treatment can ensure both the pregnant woman and the fetus stay healthy.