

Having a baby  
at 35+

More women now have their first baby over the age of 30. It's true that the risks increase with age, especially after 35, and you need to know about them. But the important thing to remember is that most women over 35 have healthy babies.

Many of the risks and complications have less to do with your age and more to do with having problems like high blood pressure or diabetes (health problems that are more common as we get older). Being in good health, having good antenatal care, healthy eating and regular exercise will reduce your risk of complications.

### What are the extra risks?

- **Miscarriage** The risk of a miscarriage is generally about one in five. This rises to about one in four (25 per cent) by the age of 40. But that still means that most pregnancies will continue.
- **Having a baby with a chromosome condition** such as Down Syndrome. The risk increases with age. The extra risk of chromosomal conditions is the main reason for increased miscarriages in older women. At age 37, the risk of having a child with a chromosome condition is about 1 in 200. By age 40, it's more than twice as high – about 1 in 84. At 45, it's about 1 in 32.

For women over 35, there's also a higher risk of:

- premature birth
- low birth weight (not smoking will reduce the risk of this)
- placenta praevia
- high blood pressure
- bleeding in pregnancy
- pre-eclampsia
- gestational diabetes
- stillbirth.

For more about these risks see *Complications in pregnancy* on page 124.

Again, this is nothing to get too gloomy about – most women over 35 won't have these problems (especially if they're in good health to begin with). And these are all risks that can be minimised by good antenatal care and healthy habits.