

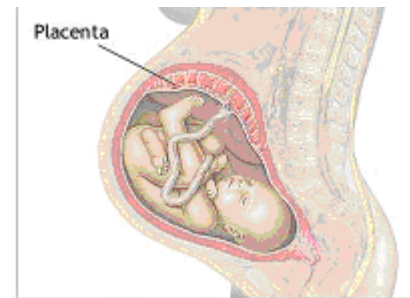
## Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

**Title:** Aspirin can protect some pregnant women from pre-eclampsia

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### **Plain Language Summary:**

**What is Pre-eclampsia?** Pre-eclampsia is a disease seen in pregnant women. Women may have headaches, trouble seeing, or swollen hands and face. Or they may have no symptoms. These women have high blood pressure,  $>140/90$ , and protein in their urine ( $>300$  mg/day). No one knows what causes the disease. For some reason, the blood vessels in these women are too tight and clogged, and do not let enough blood get through. As a result, organs like the liver, brain, and kidneys may get too little blood. Also, the pregnant woman's placenta- the organ that gives oxygen to the baby inside her - gets starved of blood.



### **What problems can pre-eclampsia cause?**

Baby may not grow well and be born too small or may die. Mom may need a C-section or baby may have to be born early. Pre-eclampsia can cause problems in mothers like bleeding, or liver or kidneys not working. Pre-eclampsia may turn into Eclampsia with seizures, and possible death. Most women in America with pre-eclampsia do very well. However, worldwide many women die from it.

**Who gets pre-eclampsia?** About 6 of every 100 pregnant women have pre-eclampsia. It only develops in women more than 20 weeks pregnant. Usually women are near the end of their pregnancy. It can also be seen in women up to 6 weeks after giving birth. Women with pre-eclampsia are often pregnant for the first time. Women more likely to get pre-eclampsia have:

- Had pre-eclampsia before
- A kidney or autoimmune disease
- Had high blood pressure or diabetes before pregnancy

**How is it treated?** Only delivering baby can cure pre-eclampsia. Mothers might be given medication to lower their blood pressure. Some women are given a medicine, called magnesium sulfate, to prevent seizures. If baby has to be delivered early, it might get a medication to help its lungs.

**Can pre-eclampsia be prevented?** There is no sure way to prevent pre-eclampsia. Some studies show that if these women at high risk take a little Aspirin every day, it might protect them. Aspirin un-clogs blood vessels so that blood can flow better to organs like the placenta. Higher amounts of Aspirin may work better, but may cause side effects like bleeding. Women should only take Aspirin with their doctor's permission. More studies are needed to find out how much Aspirin is best, when it should be started, and which women will be helped most.

If you are pregnant and have any signs of pre-eclampsia like high blood pressure, trouble seeing, or a bad headache, call your doctor.

### **Additional Resources:**

#### **For more information:**

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/preeclampsia/DS00583>

Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000898.htm>

UpToDate:

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-preeclampsia>

#### **For support or other resources:**

Preeclampsia Foundation

<http://www.preeclampsia.org/get-support>

Action on Pre-eclampsia

<http://www.apec.org.uk/>

Help Line: call 208-427-4217

### **Key Words:**

Preeclampsia

Hypertension in pregnancy

Aspirin prophylaxis

Eclampsia

Pregnancy seizure

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.