

# Circumvallate placenta

Patient Information Series – What you should know. what you should ask.

## What is a circumvallate placenta?

A circumvallate placenta is a variation in the shape of the placenta, making it look like a “pizza” with raised edges rather than a flat disc. With this shape, the membranes that surround the baby attach to the placenta at a distance inward from the edge rather than right at the edge. This can be a finding on an ultrasound before your baby is born, or when the doctors examine the placenta after the delivery.

## Why do circumvallate placentas happen?

This difference in the shape of the placenta happens when the surface of the placenta closest to the baby (“the chorionic plate”) is smaller than the surface attached to mom’s uterus (“the basal plate”). It is unknown why this happens. Some pregnancies have this finding on early ultrasound, but it disappears by the time of the routine ultrasound midway through pregnancy.

## What are the things to watch for during the pregnancy?

Some studies suggest that there may be a higher chance of the baby being smaller than expected, having bleeding, or the baby being born earlier. However, other studies have found that pregnancies with this difference in the shape of the placenta are *not* at higher risk.

Like in all pregnancies, you should watch for bleeding, and report it to your doctor if this occurs. Your doctor or midwife may ask for additional ultrasounds to keep track of the baby's growth.

## What does it mean for my baby after it is born?

This difference in the shape of the placenta has no impact on the baby after he or she is born.

## Will it happen again?

This difference in the shape of the placenta is likely a random event, and it is not likely to happen again in a next pregnancy.

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