Welcoming a new baby into the world can be a time of joy. But sometimes there can be problems.

Each woman has a different experience of pregnancy and giving birth.

Childbirth can be difficult. But noticing the signs early and taking positive actions can save lives.

This film aims to show you what some of the common problems are and how to deal with them.

Recognising a medical situation early on means that mums and babies can benefit from the best health care available.

*I had my baby in hospital because I was anaemic. This means there was not enough iron in my blood. To lose blood during childbirth when you are anaemic can be very dangerous.*

*My baby was in a bad position, upside down inside me and so I needed support from my midwife. It was good to know in advance the condition that I was in so I could get help from a midwife before I had my baby.*
[Presenter]  
We've spoken to some experienced health workers who have told us how to recognise the early warning signs and what we should do if we see them.

Janet Fyle is a midwife and runs regular clinics.

[Janet]  
0:01:52  
Anaemia or weak blood happens if women do not eat enough food containing iron or something called folic acid.

It also happens if women lose blood, have worm infection or suffer from malaria.

0:02:10  
The body needs iron to make healthy blood cells and pregnant and breast feeding women need more iron than normal in the body.

For good health and to prevent anaemia pregnant women need to eat a good healthy diet.

0:02:27  
There are some easy ways to spot anaemia. These are feeling breathless; heartbeat being faster than normal and feeling very tired.

Look out for these other signs of anaemia too:  
Is the skin paler than normal? Check the palms of the hands and soles of the feet especially. If the eyelid or tongue is pale or even white this is possibly a sign of anaemia.
Any pregnant woman with any of these signs should seek help as soon as possible from a health worker because anaemia can cause serious problems during pregnancy and childbirth.

It is normal to lose some blood during childbirth but for any pregnant woman who is anaemic even a small amount of blood loss can be very dangerous.

Also if a pregnant woman has anaemia then there's a chance that her baby will not develop and grow well inside her.

Leaving a gap of two years between pregnancies can allow a woman's body to recover and be ready to have another child. This way anaemia can be avoided.

Another warning sign is bleeding during pregnancy. It is very important to get medical help where possible if this occurs. It may be that the placenta which is the organ that feeds the growing baby inside the mother is blocking the birth canal or separating from the wall of the womb.

I had bleeding in my pregnancy so I went to see a doctor. I found that my placenta was covering the opening to the birth canal. This meant I needed an operation by a doctor to safely deliver my baby. This was possible where I live, I'm lucky, if I had not gone to the doctor my baby and I may not
Severe headaches, excessive swelling of the feet, ankles, hands and face, seeing flashing lights or having blurred vision are all warning signs during pregnancy.

These can be signs that a woman has developed dangerously high blood pressure and a condition called Pre-eclampsia. Some women also experience chest or abdominal pain and vomiting. Any pregnant woman having this problem should seek medical attention immediately.

If not treated Pre-eclampsia can cause a woman to have a fit or convulsion. It can be life threatening for the mother and the baby. And it requires urgent medical care from a skilled health worker.

Often it requires urgent delivery of the baby. It is also important to note that the condition can affect women who have just given birth.

Any woman who develops these signs within six weeks of having a baby should seek urgent medical attention.

If I had not got medical help when I started getting headaches dizziness and swollen feet me and my baby would have died.

I'm lucky that I was able to see a doctor. My condition was
0:06:04 [Presenter]
Being able to recognise the early warning signs means that you can get help. Health workers can advise pregnant women on the best care.

0:06:13 We also asked Dr Natalie Greenwold who has been looking after pregnant and birthing women for more than twenty years what else could be a problem during pregnancy and labour.

0:06:23.5 [Dr Natalie Greenwold]
Fever during pregnancy or birth is a warning sign that a woman could have an infection. An infection is caused when a bacteria or germ enters the woman’s body and makes her feel unwell. This can happen at any stage during the pregnancy or after birth.

0:06:41 If a woman gets an infection this can be very dangerous.

Women with a high fever will have skin that feels hot to touch.

They may feel unwell, cold, shivery or sweaty.

0:06:53 Another sign is fluid from the vagina that may smell offensive.

Seek medical care as soon as possible as infection is dangerous for the woman and the baby in her womb.
Women that develop an infection once the baby is born may also have more bleeding than is expected from the vagina. The blood may be in large clots or foul smelling. Get medical advice and help as soon as possible.

A month after my first baby I started to feel shivery and had a bleeding. I had to go to the hospital and they told me that I had arrived just in time. They said I would have died if I would not have gone to the hospital at the right time.

As the pregnancy progresses the mother’s bump increases in size and the baby moves more. Sometimes there can be more than one baby or the baby might be in an unusual position.

Dr Natalie Greenwold can give us more advice about this.

Women whose pregnancy belly is unusually shaped or large later in pregnancy may be expecting more than one baby. Or it could be that the baby is lying sideways or with its bottom rather than head down. This is known as the transverse or breech position.

Women who are having more than one baby and whose baby is not head down are usually advised to give birth in hospital. Sometimes a Caesarean section operation is carried out whereby the baby or babies are delivered through the
mother’s abdomen. This can only be carried out in hospital and needs to be done quickly to save the mother as well as the baby.

I had my twins by C section in hospital. They were both in the breech position so I was advised that it was safest to have the operation in hospital.

[Dr Greenwold]
Mothers form a close bond with their unborn babies. As the baby grows they start to notice that there are times of the day when the baby is very active.

If the baby stops moving around as much as normal then you should seek medical help as soon as possible.

Get medical help if possible if you notice any of the following early warning signs.

One: if the woman is feeling breathless, has a fast heartbeat and tiredness she may have anaemia

Two: if the woman bleeds then this may be a sign that the placenta is covering the birth canal

Three: If the woman has bad headaches, swelling of feet, hands and face this could be pre-eclampsia.

Four: If the woman is feeling shivery, cold, sweaty or has a high fever this could be signs of an infection as could
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bleeding or fluid from the vagina that may smell offensive.

0:09:49 **Five:** If the baby is in the breech position or more than one baby is due seek medical help.

0:09:57 **Six:** Noticing if the baby stops moving around is also an important reason to get medical help.

0:10:05 we said at the beginning of this film that most pregnancies are problem free. But knowing the warning signs and acting as quickly as possible means that more women can give birth safely, leading to happier families and communities.

0:10:23 *I'm very lucky that I had access to a doctor who advised me that I needed to have my baby in hospital, that is why I had my baby safely because I had a few complications.*