

*For Your Information
From Premier Perinatal*

What is a Perinatologist?

Pregnancy is an exciting time in a woman's life, but some women develop complications during pregnancy and need to seek a specialist for diagnosis and treatment of problems with their pregnancy.

A perinatologist, also known as a maternal-fetal medicine specialist, is a medical care provider who specializes in the care of high-risk pregnancies. Women who are at risk of developing problems, or who have a history of complications during pregnancy, may be referred to this type of specialist care. The goal of this medical professional is to help a woman have a pregnancy that is as healthy as possible, and to address any problems as they emerge. A perinatologist is a physician that works in partnership with a patient's obstetrician when pregnancy complications develop and is able to provide care for both the mom and unborn baby.

To become a perinatologist, a doctor needs to complete a residency in obstetrics, followed by a fellowship (further training) in maternal-fetal medicine.

When a woman is referred to a maternal-fetal medicine specialist, the doctor usually starts by conducting a routine ultrasound screening and a patient interview to get background on the pregnancy and the mother's history and to collect some basic information about the baby. The perinatologist can also conduct additional prenatal testing and diagnostic procedures to identify issues with the baby. After intake, he or she will discuss the pregnancy and the situation with the parents, and develop a treatment approach that will protect both mother and child.

Not all women who are referred to a perinatologist are considered high-risk, nor have complications. Some obstetricians prefer to have the perinatologist perform the initial and targeted ultrasounds, in order to have the expert early ultrasound evaluation of the developing baby.