

PLEASE TAKE ONE

# Health & Wellness M A G A Z I N E

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## Later Life Conception

The Realities for Women Age 35 and Older

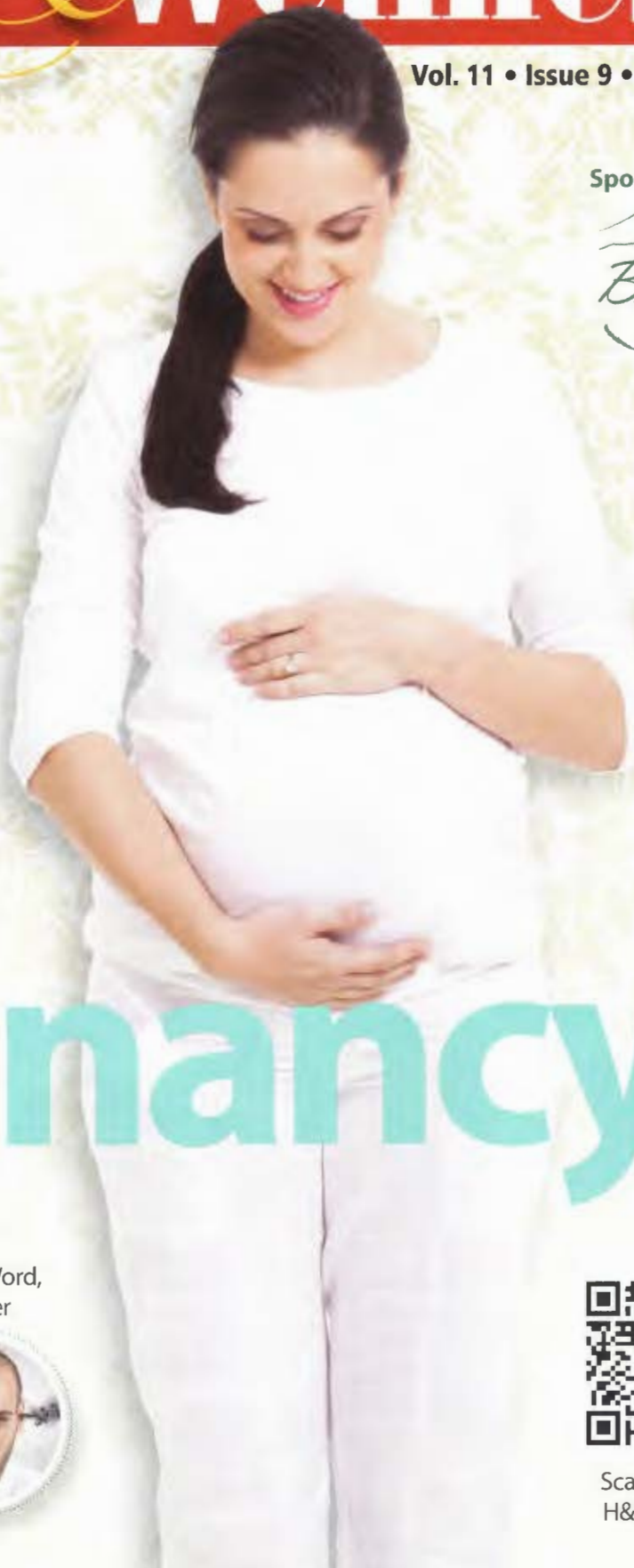
## Role of the Midwife

How to Select One

## Phantom Pregnancy

A Curious Case

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# HEALTHY Pregnancy

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## Preeclampsia: Still Deadly for Pregnant Women

By Jan Ross,  
Staff Writer

When Lady Sybil of Downton Abbey fame was not recovering immediately after the birth of her daughter on the popular television show and her blood pressure was soaring, I knew her fate was sealed. She was experiencing preeclampsia, a condition that can progress very rapidly, affects from 5 – 8 percent of pregnancies, will cause up to 15 percent of preterm births, and is one of the leading cause of maternal and perinatal deaths in the United States. Preeclampsia was much less understood during Lady Sybil's time and although physicians understood it could be deadly, they did not have the ability to quickly diagnose the condition.

In modern medicine, the ability to diagnose preeclampsia has improved dramatically, thanks to the ability to measure blood pressure and to determine the level of protein in the urine,

two important indicators of the condition. I suffered from preeclampsia during my pregnancy, and then years later, my daughter also suffered during her pregnancy. The fact that I had swelling and high blood pressure had my doctor prescribe bed rest during my pregnancy, but my daughter was immediately put on a magnesium sulfate drip in an attempt to slow down the symptoms as hers were more advanced.

Preeclampsia is a silent condition, manifesting itself in high blood pressure, swelling, sudden weight gain, headaches and changes in vision. Untreated, it can cause problems with kidney and liver function, cause blood clotting problems, fluid in the lungs, seizures or even maternal and infant death. Eclampsia can also be a problem and is a more serious condition which can cause seizures that might result in coma, brain damage, or death.

One of the risk factors of preeclampsia is a family history so it's not surprising that my daughter also experienced it. However, other risk factors

include multiple gestation, chronic high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney disease or organ transplant, maternal age and obesity. It is most common in pregnant teenagers or women in their late 30s and 40s. Women with preeclampsia are more likely to have birth complications such as low birth weight, premature birth, or placental abruption. Our grandson was born several weeks premature and had to spend the first couple months of his young life in the NICU.

Preeclampsia is a silent condition. Pregnant women may not even be aware they have it and may not feel sick at all. The exact cause of preeclampsia is not known but pregnant

women should be very aware of any unusual symptoms and report them to their doctor.

Cases of postpartum preeclampsia usually develop within 48 hours of childbirth but can also develop up to four to six weeks after the baby is born. Because new mothers are sleep deprived and may be depressed and have headaches, they don't realize these can be symptoms of postpartum preeclampsia. Eighty percent of women who die of preeclampsia die postpartum so, again, it's important to be aware of how you feel and talk to your doctor about any unusual symptoms.



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