

Hidden hazard for the unborn

Up to one in 10 pregnant women will grapple with it but many remain unaware of its potentially devastating effects. **James Chalmers** finds out more about pre-eclampsia.

IT started like an ordinary day for Tania Phillips, who was just shy of seven months pregnant with Joshua, her first son.

"I just woke up feeling great but when I was chatting to a friend at work, I mentioned that I hadn't felt (the baby) move all morning," she said.

"I thought I was just being an over-protective mum to be."

At her friend's insistence, the Bridgeman Downs resident made an appointment to see a doctor and was quickly diagnosed with pre-eclampsia.

"I had never even heard of it," Mrs Phillips said.

"(But) if I had waited much longer he wouldn't have made it and neither probably would I. The doctors said he only had four

Pregnancy dangers

PRE-ECLAMPSIA is one of the most common serious medical disorders related to pregnancy. It can affect the mother and unborn baby and claims the life of about 200 Australian babies a year, often as a consequence of premature delivery.

There are no obvious early

warning signs but symptoms include high blood pressure, thinning of the blood and liver trouble in the mother.

It can also slow the growth of babies and potentially starve them of oxygen.

The only cure for pre-eclampsia is delivery of the unborn child.

or five hours more to live (if not delivered)."

Although Joshua was only 27 weeks into his gestation, the only solution was an emergency caesarean, with Joshua weighing just 740 grams.

"(My husband) Mark lifted my head and they showed me his foot," she

said. "It was the size of the top of my thumb."

Joshua, now five and attending prep, spent the next three months in hospital, coming home on the day he was originally due.

Pre-Eclampsia Awareness Week finishes on Saturday.

Visit www.aapec.org.au.



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■ Raising awareness . . . Tania Phillips and Joshua, 5, with a toy bear wearing Joshua's nappy and hat, representing his size when born.