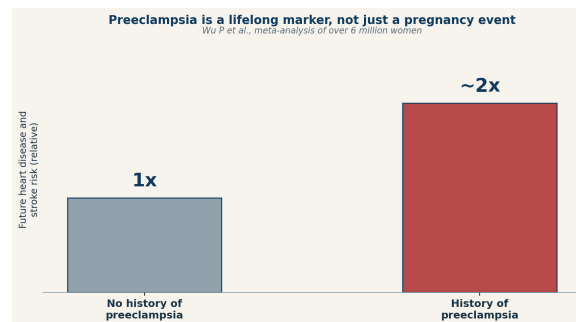


Preeclampsia and Your Future Heart Health

What a preeclampsia diagnosis means for the decades after pregnancy

It is not just a pregnancy event. It is a lifelong marker your heart care should account for.



Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>

Rias KS Ali, MD FACC

Board Certified in Interventional Cardiology & Cardiovascular Disease

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 |
RiasAliMD.com

Last Updated: August 2026



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>

1 of 18 | Page



Save
Contact Info

Names & Terms You Will Hear

Term	Meaning
Preeclampsia	A pregnancy condition with new high blood pressure plus signs of organ strain, usually after 20 weeks.
Early-onset preeclampsia	Preeclampsia that develops before 34 weeks. It carries a higher long-term heart risk than preeclampsia that develops later.
Coronary artery calcium (CAC) score	A heart scan that directly measures buildup in your arteries. Useful earlier in life for women with a preeclampsia history.
Cardiovascular risk factor	Anything that raises your future chance of heart disease or stroke. Major medical groups now count preeclampsia as one.
Postpartum	The period after delivery. Blood pressure and heart risk both need attention here, not just during pregnancy.

Why This Is Not Just a Pregnancy Story

- Preeclampsia and ordinary heart disease share some of the same underlying blood vessel biology.
- That shared biology is the leading explanation for why a preeclampsia history predicts future heart risk so consistently across large studies.
- The connection holds even in women whose blood pressure fully normalized after delivery and who feel completely healthy now.
- Major medical organizations, including the American Heart Association, have moved to formally recognize this and recommend it be factored into long-term care.
- In practice, this recognition has been slow to reach everyday care. Many women are simply never told.
- This guide exists to close that gap directly.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Preeclampsia and Your Future Heart Health?

- If you had preeclampsia, this guide is about what comes next, not about the pregnancy itself.
- Preeclampsia used to be seen as a problem that ended at delivery. That view has changed.
- A large analysis of more than 6 million women found that a history of preeclampsia roughly doubles the future risk of heart disease and stroke.
- The American Heart Association now lists preeclampsia as an official cardiovascular risk factor, alongside things like smoking and diabetes.
- This is true even if your blood pressure returned to normal after delivery and you feel completely well now.
- The goal of this guide is a plan: what to watch, when to get screened, and what actually lowers the risk.

This risk does not require symptoms to be real. A roughly doubled future risk of heart disease and stroke applies even if you feel completely well right now and your blood pressure has been normal since delivery. The value of knowing this is having more years to act on it, not a reason to worry.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

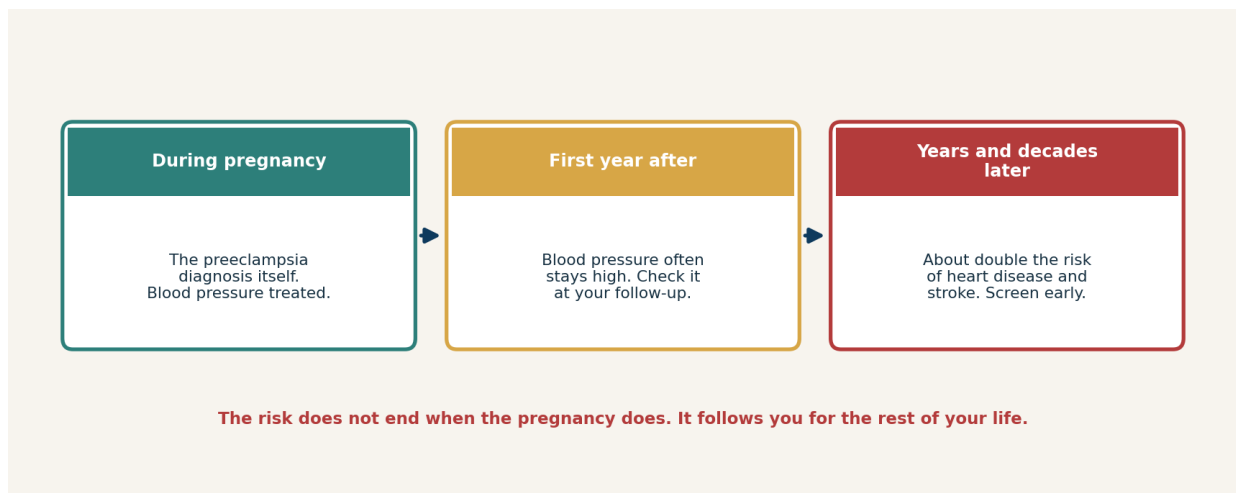
This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Why It Matters

- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women, and preeclampsia is one of the clearest warning signs we have years before it happens.
- The risk is not small or theoretical. Roughly double the future risk of heart disease and stroke is a meaningful, well-documented number.
- Timing matters. Preeclampsia before 34 weeks is called early-onset. It carries a larger long-term risk than preeclampsia that develops later.
- One study found close to a 3.6-fold rise in cardiovascular death by age 60 in women with early-onset preeclampsia.
- Women in their mid-to-late 40s with a preeclampsia history are about four times as likely to have detectable coronary artery calcium as women the same age without that history.
- None of this is destiny. It is information that lets you and your doctor start prevention years earlier than you otherwise would.



The risk timeline. Preeclampsia is not just a pregnancy event. Blood pressure can stay high the first year after. The future risk of heart disease and stroke follows for decades. This is why early screening matters.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Risk Factors

Some patients are more likely to develop this condition. Knowing your risk helps your care team take extra precautions.

Risk Factor	Why It Increases Risk
Early-onset preeclampsia (before 34 weeks)	Carries a larger long-term cardiovascular risk than preeclampsia that develops later in pregnancy.
Preeclampsia in more than one pregnancy	Repeated episodes are linked to a higher future risk than a single episode.
Blood pressure that stays high after delivery	A signal that the underlying vascular changes have not fully resolved.
Preexisting high blood pressure or diabetes	Combines with the preeclampsia history to raise risk further.
A family history of heart disease	Adds to the risk on top of the preeclampsia history itself.
Not being screened or followed after pregnancy	The most fixable item on this list. Many women are never told to connect their preeclampsia history to heart screening.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

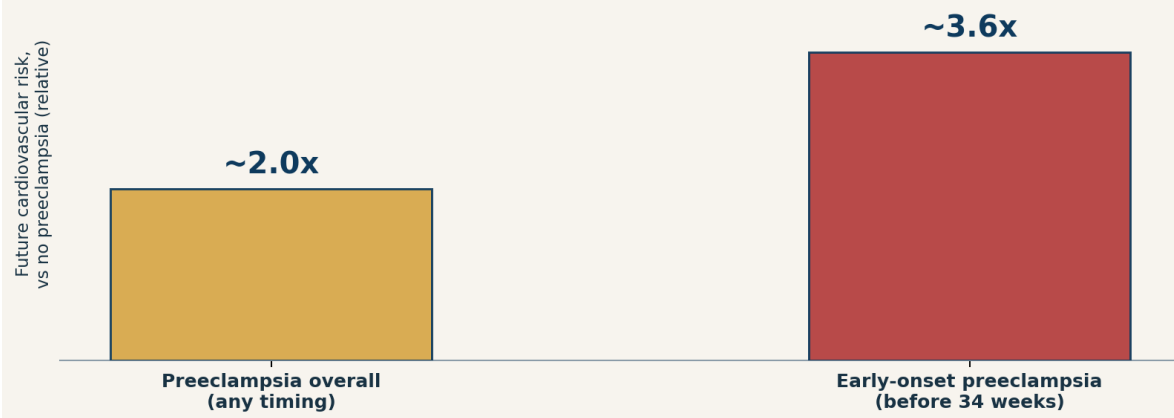
This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Timing matters: earlier preeclampsia carries more long-term risk

Left: heart disease/stroke risk, any preeclampsia (Wu et al.). Right: cardiovascular death by 60, early-onset specifically (a separate analysis).



Timing changes the size of the risk. Preeclampsia overall roughly doubles future heart disease and stroke risk. Early-onset preeclampsia, before 34 weeks, carries an even larger risk on its own.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Treatment Options

- Tell every doctor you see, not just your OB, that you had preeclampsia. Many primary care and cardiology visits never ask.
- Get your blood pressure checked regularly, not just during pregnancy or right after. This should become a routine habit.
- Ask about a baseline cholesterol panel and blood sugar test earlier than you otherwise might, especially if you had early-onset preeclampsia.
- Ask whether a coronary artery calcium scan makes sense for you, particularly in your 40s if you had early-onset preeclampsia.
- Ask for your 10-year heart risk score to be calculated, factoring in your preeclampsia history as part of the conversation.
- If lifestyle changes are not enough to control blood pressure or cholesterol, medicines like blood pressure pills or statins are used the same way they would be for anyone else at similar risk.

Screening step	When to consider it
Blood pressure checks	Ongoing, not just at your postpartum visit
Cholesterol and blood sugar panel	Earlier than routine screening age
10-year heart risk score	At your first primary care visit after delivery
Coronary calcium scan	Consider in your 40s, especially after early-onset preeclampsia



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Building Your Screening Plan

- Start with a conversation. Tell your primary care doctor about your preeclampsia history at your next visit if you have not already.
- Ask for regular blood pressure checks, not just once postpartum.
- Ask about earlier cholesterol and blood sugar screening than routine guidelines would otherwise suggest.
- Ask for your 10-year heart risk score to be calculated with your preeclampsia history factored into the conversation.
- If you had early-onset preeclampsia and are approaching your 40s, ask specifically about a coronary artery calcium scan.
- None of this requires alarm. It requires making sure the people caring for your heart actually know your history.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Comfort Measures at Home (No Medication Needed)

These simple steps support healing and ease symptoms. Use them alongside any medication your doctor prescribes.

- Aim for regular activity, most days of the week, once you are cleared for exercise after delivery.
- Follow a lower-sodium, plant-forward eating pattern, similar to what is recommended for anyone managing blood pressure.
- Do not smoke, and get support to quit if you do.
- Manage stress and prioritize sleep, both of which affect blood pressure over time.
- Keep your postpartum and annual well-woman visits, and specifically raise your preeclampsia history at each one.
- If you are planning another pregnancy, discuss your preeclampsia history beforehand, since it affects monitoring in the next pregnancy too.

Related guides from our practice.

Pregnancy and Heart Disease and Postpartum Heart Care and Contraception for the period around delivery itself.

Heart Disease in Women for the broader picture of risk factors that affect women specifically.

Hypertension for managing blood pressure long term.

Understanding Your Heart Risk Score and Coronary Calcium Score for the two screening tools this guide recommends.

Statin Therapy if cholesterol treatment becomes part of your plan.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Risks, Benefits, and Alternatives

Every choice has trade-offs. Use this table to start the shared decision conversation.

Option	Risks	Benefits	Alternatives
Long-term cardiovascular screening after preeclampsia	Extra visits and tests. Time and, depending on insurance, some cost.	Catches rising blood pressure, cholesterol, or artery buildup years before symptoms would appear, when prevention works best.	Waiting until routine screening age, which loses the years of advantage a preeclampsia history gives you.
Coronary artery calcium scan in your 40s	A small amount of radiation. Not needed for everyone, but genuinely useful in this specific group.	Women 45-50 with prior preeclampsia are about four times as likely to have detectable calcium as women without that history. A scan can settle uncertainty either way.	Skipping the scan and relying on standard risk-factor screening alone.
No special follow-up beyond routine care	Loses years of head start on a well-documented, doubled future risk.	No extra visits or tests.	Adding blood pressure checks, a risk score calculation, and a calcium scan when appropriate.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Common Misconceptions

Myth	Reality
My blood pressure went back to normal, so the risk is gone.	A normal reading now does not erase the future risk. The roughly two-fold increase in heart disease and stroke risk applies even to women whose blood pressure returned to normal after delivery.
Preeclampsia only matters if it happens again in a future pregnancy.	The risk that matters most for this guide is not about future pregnancies. It is about your own heart and blood vessels for the rest of your life, pregnant or not.
I am young and healthy, so heart screening does not apply to me yet.	This is exactly the situation preeclampsia history is meant to change. Women with early-onset preeclampsia in their 40s already show more coronary calcium than women the same age without that history. Screening early is the point.
Only my OB needs to know about my preeclampsia history.	Your primary care doctor and any cardiologist you see need this information too. It changes when screening should start, not just how the current pregnancy was managed.
A doubled risk means I will definitely get heart disease.	It does not. It means your starting risk is higher than someone without this history, which is exactly why early screening and prevention make a real difference.
Nothing can be done about this risk anyway.	The opposite is true. Blood pressure control, cholesterol management, not smoking, and regular activity all reduce cardiovascular risk, and starting earlier gives more years for them to work.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Possible Complications

Knowing what can go wrong helps you spot problems early. Most complications are uncommon, especially with treatment.

Where / What	What Can Happen
Chronic high blood pressure	Women with a preeclampsia history are more likely to develop ongoing high blood pressure later in life, not just during pregnancy.
Coronary artery disease	Part of the doubled future risk. This means blockages in the heart's own arteries. Calcium scoring can catch it early.
Stroke	Also part of the doubled long-term risk seen across large studies of women with a preeclampsia history.
Heart failure	Some studies link preeclampsia to a higher future risk of a weakening heart muscle. This is more common after early-onset preeclampsia.
Kidney disease	Preeclampsia and future kidney disease share similar blood vessel changes, so the two risks are linked.
Missed prevention windows	This is not a medical complication of preeclampsia itself. It is the most common real-world one. Many women are never told to connect the two.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Points to Know

If you remember nothing else, remember these key points.

- A history of preeclampsia roughly doubles your future risk of heart disease and stroke, even if your blood pressure returned to normal after delivery.
- Early-onset preeclampsia, before 34 weeks, carries a larger long-term risk than later-onset preeclampsia.
- This risk is now recognized by the American Heart Association as an official cardiovascular risk factor.
- Tell every doctor you see about your preeclampsia history, not just your OB.
- Ask about earlier blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar screening.
- A coronary artery calcium scan can be genuinely useful in your 40s if you had early-onset preeclampsia.
- This is not destiny. Prevention that starts earlier works better, and that extra time is exactly what knowing your history buys you.
- If you are planning another pregnancy, your preeclampsia history changes how that pregnancy will be monitored.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

When to Call Us - and When to Call 911

If you are not sure, call. We would rather hear from you twice than miss a real problem.

- You had preeclampsia and have never discussed it with your primary care doctor or a cardiologist. Bring it up at your next visit.
- Your blood pressure at home is running above 130/80 outside of pregnancy. Call us to discuss.
- New chest pain, shortness of breath, or swelling. Call us or 911 depending on severity, the same as for anyone with these symptoms.
- You are planning another pregnancy and want to understand your risk beforehand. Call us or your OB to plan ahead.
- You are unsure whether a coronary calcium scan or an earlier risk assessment makes sense for you. Call us to discuss your specific history.
- Severe headache, vision changes, or swelling that feels like it did during preeclampsia, at any point postpartum. Call your OB or 911 right away.

Office: (727) 943-5200



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Trusted Resources

The links below are the trusted resources Dr. Ali used to write this guide and that he recommends you visit for more information. Each is a clickable link in the digital version and a Short.io tracked URL on the printed version.

- [American Heart Association — Hypertension in Pregnancy Scientific Statement](#) - The official statement establishing preeclampsia as a cardiovascular risk factor.
- [ACOG — Preeclampsia and High Blood Pressure During Pregnancy](#) - Patient-facing background on preeclampsia itself.
- [Cleveland Clinic — Preeclampsia](#) - Plain-language overview of preeclampsia.
- [MedlinePlus \(NIH\) — Heart Disease in Women](#) - NIH background on heart disease risk factors specific to women.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Sources Used to Build This Guide

Every recommendation in this guide is grounded in one or more of the studies, guidelines, or trusted resources below. Short links are tracked so Dr. Ali can see which references patients are reading; nothing personally identifying is captured.

- [Wu P et al. Preeclampsia and Future Cardiovascular Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. Circ Cardiovasc Qual Outcomes 2017;10:e003497 \[Primary Trial\]](#)
Large meta-analysis (over 6 million women) establishing that a history of preeclampsia roughly doubles future cardiovascular disease and stroke risk. Source for the core statistic used throughout this guide.
- [Long-Term Impacts of Preeclampsia on the Cardiovascular System of Mother and Offspring, Hypertension 2024 \[Peer Reviewed\]](#)
Source for the early-onset preeclampsia finding (3.6-fold increase in cardiovascular death by age 60) and the distinction between early-onset and later-onset preeclampsia risk.
- [ACC — Preeclampsia is an Independent Risk Factor for Early Onset Coronary Artery Calcification \[Society\]](#)
Source for the coronary artery calcium finding: women 45-50 with prior preeclampsia were about four times as likely to have detectable coronary calcium as women 40-45, used to explain why screening starts earlier in this group.
- [Hypertension in Pregnancy: Diagnosis, Blood Pressure Goals, and Pharmacotherapy — AHA Scientific Statement, Hypertension 2022 \[Guideline\]](#)
AHA statement establishing preeclampsia as a formal cardiovascular risk factor and framing the postpartum and long-term follow-up recommendations.
- [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists — Preeclampsia and High Blood Pressure During Pregnancy \[Society\]](#)
Patient-facing framing of preeclampsia itself, since this guide assumes the reader already had the diagnosis and is focused on what comes after.
- [Cleveland Clinic — Preeclampsia \[Patient Education\]](#)
Patient-voice reference for describing preeclampsia in plain language.
- [MedlinePlus \(NIH\) — Heart Disease in Women \[Patient Education\]](#)
NIH plain-language background on heart disease risk factors specific to women, complementing the pregnancy-specific risk this guide covers.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

About This Guide

Rias KS Ali, MD FACC | Board Certified in Interventional Cardiology & Cardiovascular Disease

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com

Version: 2026-08-15

Reviewer note: Reviewed against the AHA scientific statement on hypertension in pregnancy, ACOG, and Cleveland Clinic. Ours adds: the roughly two-fold future risk drawn as a chart, an early-versus-late-onset comparison chart, a timeline showing the risk does not end at delivery, and a direct answer on when heart screening should start.

Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes only and does not replace medical advice from your physician. Recommendations may not apply to every patient. Always follow the specific instructions of Dr. Ali and your care team. In an emergency call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info

Take This Guide With You



Scan or visit: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>

Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>

Office: (727) 943-5200

4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com



Visit
RiasAliMD.com

This guide is educational only. Always follow your doctor's specific recommendations.
4740 Mile Stretch Drive, Holiday FL 34690 | Office: (727) 943-5200 | Fax: (727) 943-5201 | RiasAliMD.com
Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/preeclampsia-guide>



Save
Contact Info