

PREGNANCY WEEK BY WEEK

This section describes week by week the way that your baby develops during your pregnancy. During the 40 weeks or so of pregnancy, your baby will grow from a pinprick-sized cluster of cells to a baby boy or girl weighing an average of 3.4 kilograms. Pregnancy Week by Week also looks at some of the changes your body goes through at this time, and how your emotions and experiences may change as your pregnancy progresses.

Each woman will experience pregnancy slightly differently so you should see the stages of pregnancy described here as just a guide. It lets you know what is likely to be happening to your body at each stage of your pregnancy and tells you about your baby's growth and development.

Keep in mind that different pregnancies develop at different rates. The measurements given for weight and length are averages - this means that your baby may grow slower or faster and still be growing well.

You may like to think about keeping a diary during your pregnancy. Your diary can become a special place to write down how you are feeling and the changes you are experiencing in your body as your baby grows. A pregnancy diary can be a wonderful record to look back on after your baby is born.

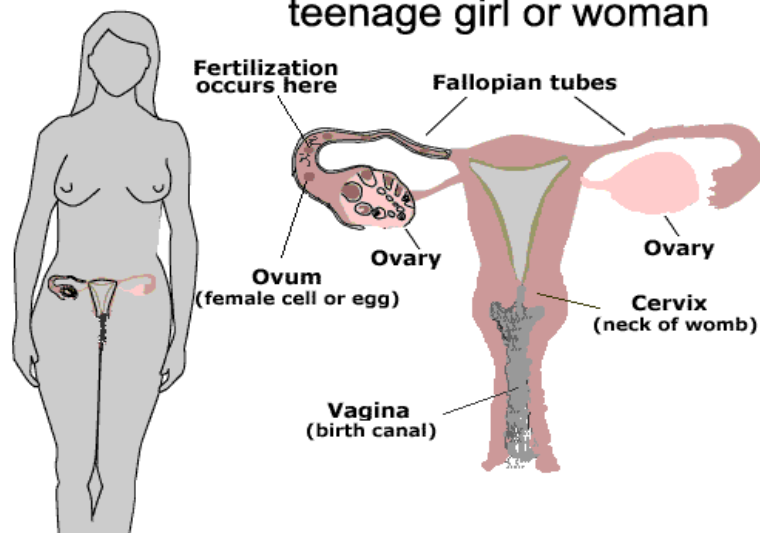
- **CONCEPTION**
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CONCEPTION

Pregnancy begins when an egg (ovum) is released from your ovary about midway between menstrual periods, and is fertilised by a male cell (sperm). Fertilization usually takes place in the outer end of the Fallopian tube. Millions of sperm surround the ovum, but only one can enter it. As the head of the sperm enters the ovum its tail fall off.

As the fertilized egg moves down the Fallopian tube, it divides into two cells. The cells keep dividing until a solid ball of cells has been formed. When it reaches the womb, this ball of cells becomes attached to the wall of the womb. Once the ball of cells is attached, the tissue surrounding produces hormones which help the pregnancy to continue.

The reproductive system in a teenage girl or woman



The ball of cells, which develops into the baby, is referred to as the embryo at this stage. The part of the ball of cells which attaches to the wall of your womb becomes three things – the umbilical cord, the placenta, and the amniotic sac. These are all very important for the growth and protection of the baby.

BABY'S GROWTH IN THE FIRST 3 MONTHS

During the first 12 weeks or 3 months of your pregnancy, you will usually only put on about 1 or 2 kilos, or possibly less if you have morning sickness. Most of this weight is in the placenta (the afterbirth) and in your breasts, uterus and in the extra blood your body will make.

During pregnancy your body works harder, your heartbeat and breathing rate are faster. Hormones may make your breasts become tender to the touch, and become larger and heavier. Your uterus will get bigger and put pressure on your bladder so that you need to urinate (pass water) more often.

This section provides you with a week by week summary of what is happening to your body and to your baby. Don't worry if you think you are different from the week by week stages in this section, as every woman will experience her pregnancy slightly differently. Always discuss any concerns or worries you may have during your pregnancy with a doctor or midwife. You may also like to link to other parts of this site to find more information on some of the issues that are important during your first trimester (3 months).

For more information on healthy eating in pregnancy [Preparing for Pregnancy - Watching what you eat](#). To find out more about smoking, alcohol, medicines and coffee in pregnancy, please see the section [Staying well - Avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs](#). You will find more information about folic acid (folate) in [Preparing for Pregnancy - Folic acid \(folate\)](#)

Week 3

You

Each week of your pregnancy is numbered by the amount of weeks from the first day of your last period. This means that if you have a regular four week cycle, week 3 of your pregnancy will actually be the first week after your baby was conceived. At this stage, you will not have missed your period and won't know if you are pregnant.

Your baby

During week 3 the fertilised egg burrows into the lining of your uterus and is the size of a full stop.

Week 4

You

During week 4, you still haven't missed your period, but if you have been trying to conceive (get pregnant) you will probably be feeling very excited as you wonder if you have been successful this month.

Your baby

Specialised layers of cells are beginning to develop, which will form your baby's vital organs, nervous system, bones, muscles and blood.

Week 5

You

By week 5, your period is late so you may begin to think that you could be pregnant and you may notice that your breasts are slightly bigger and tender to touch. But you may simply feel as if your period is about to start (some women have called the first couple of weeks of pregnancy the 'longest stretch of PMS they have ever experienced!').

As soon as your period is a day late, you can do a urine pregnancy test. You can go to a doctor for a pregnancy test or you can buy a pregnancy testing kit from your pharmacy.

Some women may have already experienced nausea and vomiting by this time. This is known as morning sickness but can actually happen at any time of the day or night. The severity of morning sickness and how long into the pregnancy it lasts varies a great deal from one woman to another. For most women who do get morning sickness, the problem usually improves greatly by the end of the first three months, if not sooner. For information on how to manage morning sickness see [Staying Well](#)

Your baby

At week 5, your baby is about 2 mm long. Your baby's spine, brain, muscles and bone are already starting to form.

Week 6

You

You may be feeling very tired at this early stage of your pregnancy. Gentle, regular exercise such as swimming or walking will help you to feel less tired and more able to cope with the demands your pregnancy is making on your body.

Your baby

By the end of this week, your baby (called an embryo) has a heartbeat. Blood is pumping around the baby and out along the umbilical cord to the placenta. The placenta is an organ that acts as a filter. It allows oxygen and nutrients to pass to the embryo, and carbon dioxide and waste products to be eliminated. The placenta is also called the afterbirth.

Your baby's head and body are now defined and tiny buds appear where their arms and legs will develop. Your baby is now about 6 mm long—about the length of a grain of rice.

Week 7

You

Some women find that they are quite emotional during these early weeks of pregnancy, this is caused mainly by pregnancy hormones.

Some women may notice that their breasts are bigger now and the dark area (areola) around their nipples has darkened. You may see large 'goose bumps' forming around the areola (called Montgomery's tubercles) and your nipples may become larger.

Your baby

Your baby's spinal cord and brain are developing and your baby lies within a sac of membranes and is

supported by fluid known as amniotic fluid. Nostrils and lips now appear on your baby's face and the eyes can be seen under the skin.

Week 8

You

You may find that you have gone off certain foods that you used to like. Some women also have a taste like metal in their mouth, which is probably caused by pregnancy hormones. As your uterus is growing, you may need to urinate (pass water) more often because of the increased pressure on your bladder.

Many women notice that they have more vaginal discharge at this stage. This is quite normal, unless the discharge is itchy, uncomfortable or has an unpleasant smell. If your discharge is causing you concern speak to your doctor or midwife, as this may be a sign of a vaginal infection or thrush. Thrush is a common problem during pregnancy, but can be easily treated. For more information, please see the section [Staying Well - Common health problems in pregnancy - Vaginal thrush](#).

Your baby

The baby now looks more human - your baby's limbs can be seen and their hands and feet are taking shape ... all this amazing growth, yet your baby is now around just 1.3 cm long!

Week 9

You

Many people talk about 'the glow of pregnancy', referring to the way a pregnant woman's skin looks. This glow is caused by an increase in oil on skin due to pregnancy hormones. But not all women feel this glow, and some may notice pimples because of this extra oil. Some women have the opposite problem and their skin becomes very dry. Either way, make sure you drink plenty of water (6–8 glasses per day) which helps to purify the skin.

Your baby

At the end of this week, your baby is now called a foetus, not an embryo. The limbs are growing quickly and the fingers and toes are forming. Your baby's skeleton, which started as cartilage, is now changing to bone.

Week 10

You

You may find that your clothes are getting tighter around your waist and breasts. Your abdomen may look bigger, but at this stage it is often due to changes in your bowel (rather than your uterus getting bigger) and is nothing to worry about. Your uterus is now about the size of an orange and is still hidden within your pelvis.

Your baby

Your baby is now about 2.5 cm long and has tiny fingers and toes.

Week 11

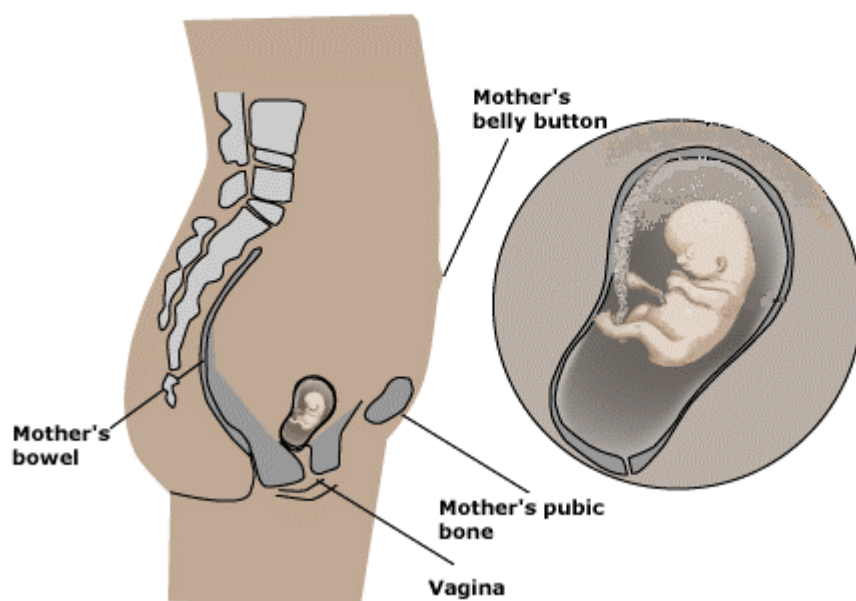
You

Some women find that constipation is a problem during pregnancy. Pregnancy hormones relax the bowel, which means that bowel motions don't pass through as quickly. Increasing the fibre in your diet and drinking plenty of water will usually help. If you are still having problems, please talk to your doctor, midwife or pharmacist about bulking laxatives that are suitable to use during pregnancy. For more information see [Staying Well - Common health problems in pregnancy](#).

Your baby

Your baby's internal organs are now all formed—including their ovaries or testicles.

Baby development at the third month



Week 12

You

Often by now morning sickness is much less of a problem and you are probably feeling less tired. Your uterus is continuing to grow and is higher than your pelvis. From this stage on your baby's heartbeat may be able to be heard with a foetal heart detector.

Your baby

Your baby's head is becoming more rounded and the eyelids have formed and closed over the eyes. You still can't feel it, but your baby is moving around constantly in your amniotic fluid—they can now roll, stretch, yawn and wriggle their fingers.

BABY'S GROWTH IN THE SECOND 3 MONTHS

During the next 3 months of your pregnancy you will probably put on about 6 kilograms, even though your unborn baby will only weigh about 1 kilogram. The other weight will be in the placenta, your uterus, breasts and extra blood.

During this 3 month period some major tests may be done, especially if you are over 35 or there is a family medical problem. You will probably also have an ultrasound scan to check on the baby's growth.

You will need to go to regular antenatal checkups with your doctor or midwife. Many women find that they feel great during this stage of their pregnancy. Much of the tiredness and morning sickness of the first trimester is behind you, and your baby is not yet so big that you are feeling exhausted from carrying it around.

Remember to continue being careful with your diet, to look after yourself and to rest as much as possible.

Week 13

You

If you have had morning sickness early in your pregnancy, this will usually settle about now. But some women will feel sick through their whole pregnancy. Talk to your midwife or doctor if morning sickness is still a problem for you.

From now on your uterus will grow larger and your abdomen will become more noticeable.

Your baby

Your baby is now fully formed and looks like a tiny human being. Most of your baby's internal organs are working.

Week 14

You

Your uterus is now the size of a large grapefruit. A dark line down the centre of your abdomen may start to appear. This is called the Linea nigra. It is a dark pigmentation of your skin, and will usually fade after your baby is born.

Your baby

Your baby now has eyebrows and a small amount of hair on his or her head and measures about 12 cm long. Your baby now gets all of their nourishment from the placenta—they also drink some of the amniotic fluid around them and can pass urine.

Week 15

You

There is more blood in your body now because your baby needs more oxygen as it is growing. Your heart will need to work 20 per cent harder to pump this extra blood around your body. Some women find that they may forget things, have trouble concentrating and become clumsier.

Your baby

The hair on your baby's head and eyebrows is becoming coarser. If your baby has an inherited or genetic tendency for dark hair, then the pigment is now forming in their hair follicles.

Week 16

You

At your antenatal visit, the doctor will feel your abdomen to check the size of your uterus, which has now risen out of your pelvis. You will have your blood pressure checked and hands and feet checked for swelling at each visit from now on.

For information on antenatal tests see [Checkups - Checking your baby's health before birth](#).

Your baby

A fine downy hair (called lanugo) begins to form over your baby's body and they will begin to develop eyelashes. At this stage, your baby may even find and suck their thumb! Your baby is now about 16 cm long and weighs about 135 g.

Week 17

You

Some women find their nose becomes blocked up and sometimes bleeds for no obvious reason. This is a common problem during pregnancy and is probably because of pregnancy hormones, which cause the delicate nasal membranes to soften and swell. If your nose does become blocked, try not to blow it too hard, as this can cause nosebleeds. Many over the counter cold medicines are not suitable to use during pregnancy. Steam inhalations are a good alternative for clearing your nose while pregnant.

Your baby

Your growing baby has now pushed up the top of your uterus and this can be felt between your pubic bone and navel. From now on, your baby weighs more than the placenta (the afterbirth).

Week 18

You

You may notice your nipples are leaking small amounts of fluid, which is called colostrum. This is a sign that your breasts are developing so you can feed your baby. Many women do not notice any fluid during pregnancy but will find colostrum appears when their baby is born.

Your baby

Measuring about 19 cm and weighing about 170 g, your baby is able to kick, grasp and suck.

Week 19

You

Any time now, you may feel your baby moving or kicking, like a faint tickling or fluttering. If this is your second or third baby, you may have felt these movements earlier.

To read more about the test you may have at this stage please see [Check-ups - Ultrasound scans](#).

Your baby

The baby's milk teeth are developing in the gums and so are the buds for permanent teeth.

Week 20

You

The fundus (top of your uterus) is now at navel level and your doctor or midwife will palpate (feel) your abdomen to check the size of your uterus.

Your baby

Your baby's skin begins to form a white, waxy coating called vernix. The vernix clings to the lanugo (the fine downy hair) all over your baby's skin, to protect it and hold in moisture.

Week 21

You

Some women begin having problems with heartburn or indigestion, which is quite uncomfortable and annoying. You can relieve heartburn with an antacid solution or tablets - please ask your pharmacist, doctor or midwife to recommend a product that is suitable to use in pregnancy. For more information on dealing with this see [Staying Well - Common health problems in pregnancy](#).

Your baby

Your baby weighs about 340 g and is moving around freely within the amniotic fluid in your uterus.

Week 22

You

Your gums may swell and bleed when you brush your teeth. The swelling is a result of more pregnancy hormones.

Emotionally, you may have highs and lows and you may be more sensitive than usual. At this time of pregnancy your sleep patterns may change and you may find that you remember your dreams.

Your baby

Your baby is now about 25cm long and would fit into your cupped hands.

Week 23

You

Some women get a stitch-like pain down one side of their abdomen. This is because your uterine ligaments are stretching as your uterus is enlarging. The pain will usually go away after you have rested and it is nothing to be worried about. However, if the pain does not go, or if you have any bleeding or vaginal discharge with the pain, then you should ring your doctor or midwife and talk about it.

Your baby

Your baby is now forming a pattern of activity and sleep, and this may be different from yours! Your baby may be more active when you want to sleep.

Week 24

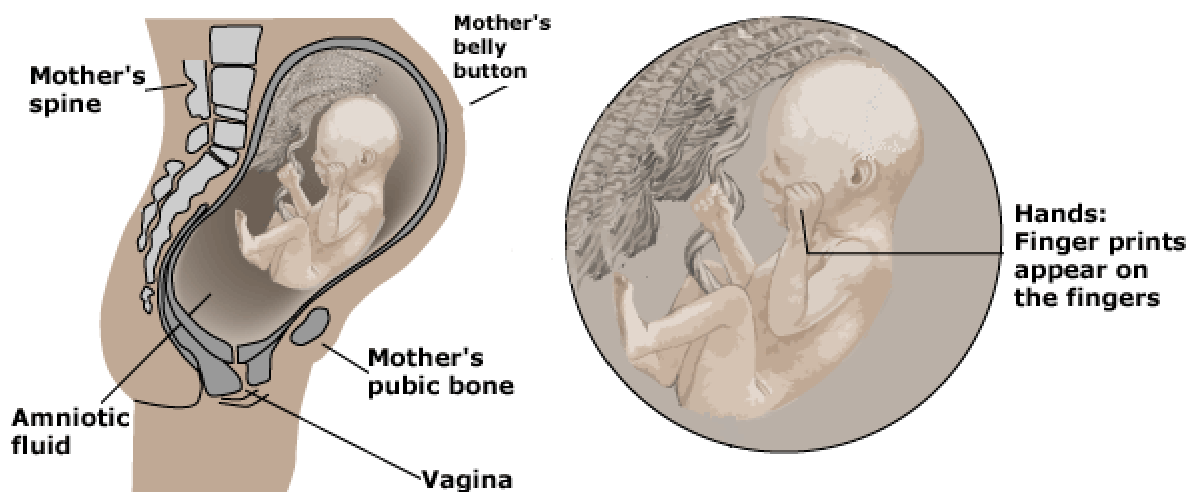
You

You may also start noticing Braxton Hicks contractions, which is your uterus practising for labour. Your abdomen will feel hard when you have these contractions. This is a normal part of pregnancy and you may feel them occasionally from now on. If your contractions start to become stronger, increase in frequency and last longer, contact your doctor or midwife.

Your baby

Your baby is rapidly growing now and their internal organs are all formed and mature, except for the lungs. If your baby was born at this stage it may be mature enough to have a chance of survival in a neonatal intensive care unit.

Baby development at the sixth month



Week 25

You

When you go to bed at night, you may get leg cramps. This is a common problem during pregnancy. It is not serious and will not harm your baby, but can become very uncomfortable for you. For information on dealing with cramps link to [Staying Well - Common health problems in pregnancy](#).

Week 26

You

You may notice a rhythmic beating low in your abdomen that may last for 15 to 30 minutes. This is your baby hiccupping!

If you haven't already done so now is a good time to be expertly fitted for a supportive maternity bra. Choose one made of cotton with adjustable straps so it remains comfortable as your breast size grows and fastenings with front opening for breastfeeding.

Your baby

Your baby is now about 33 cm long and weighs about 500 g. Your baby may now be able to open and close its eyes.

Week 27

You

As your baby is growing quickly during this time, you are likely to be putting on weight fairly regularly from now until you are about 36 weeks pregnant. Keep doing your best to follow a healthy eating plan.

Your baby

The baby's skin is starting to change from being transparent (see-through) to opaque (can't see through). It is very wrinkled, but protected and nourished by the covering of vernix.

Week 28

You

At your antenatal check, your doctor or midwife will palpate (feel) your abdomen—your uterus will now be well above your navel.

Remember to write down any questions you or your partner may have, as checkups are a good time to discuss queries or problems with the doctor or midwife. If you have a Pregnancy Hand-Held Record you can use the spaces provided in it to write down your questions.

Your baby

Your baby is now about 38 cm long, weighs around 900 g. At this antenatal check-up, your doctor or midwife will check the size of your baby and can often feel certain body parts, such as their head, bottom and limbs.

BABY'S GROWTH IN THE LAST 3 MONTHS

During this last 3 months of pregnancy, you may be worried or anxious about labour and wish for the time before the birth to go quickly. You will probably gain about 5 kilograms during this stage. Most of this weight will be from your baby, but you will also gain extra weight from the amniotic fluid, the placenta, your breasts, blood and your uterus. You will need to have more frequent antenatal checkups during this time.

Towards the end of your pregnancy you will need weekly checkups. Your doctor or midwife will continue to monitor your progress to make sure all is going well. Problems which can make your life uncomfortable at this stage may include back pain, difficulty getting comfortable enough to sleep, and pressure on your lungs from the baby. You may get more Braxton Hicks contractions and will probably begin to feel quite tired. Try to relax and get all the rest you can—your baby's arrival is not far away.

Week 29

You

You probably feel as though the baby is pushing against all your internal organs. This is because your uterus is pushing up against your diaphragm, stomach, liver and intestines.

Some women stop work around this time because they start to feel more tired.

Your baby

Your baby is now about two thirds of its birth size.

Week 30

You

Pregnancy hormones have been softening your ligaments. The combination of this and your baby's increasing weight can cause problems with backache. It's therefore really important to maintain good posture when you are standing or sitting. Try putting a cushion behind the small of your back when you are sitting. Take care when lifting, and try to avoid wearing high heels from now on.

Your baby

Your baby's eyes are learning how to focus. Even if you don't notice regular Braxton Hicks contractions, your baby is becoming very aware of them.

Week 31

You

You may start to feel breathless at times because the baby is pushing up against your lungs, particularly when you are sitting. This feeling is normal and does not mean that you or your baby is getting less oxygen. It's good to know that changes to your respiratory system actually allow you to take in more air and use it more efficiently.

Your baby

Your baby's lungs are maturing, but they still need to develop surfactant, a substance that allows your baby to breathe after it is born.

Week 32

You

Many babies will begin to settle into a head-down position in the uterus. This is because the top part of the uterus is larger and allows more room for the biggest part of the baby, which is baby's bottom and bent up legs. At this stage the baby still has plenty of room to move around in the uterus and the position is not important.

Your baby

Your baby now weighs about 1.8 kg, and is about 41 cm long.

Week 33

You

You will begin to feel your baby's movements more as prods and kicks and you may even be able to tell the difference between a foot, knee or your baby's bottom.

Your baby

Your baby is now beginning to form fat reserves under their skin, and is growing quickly.

Week 34

You

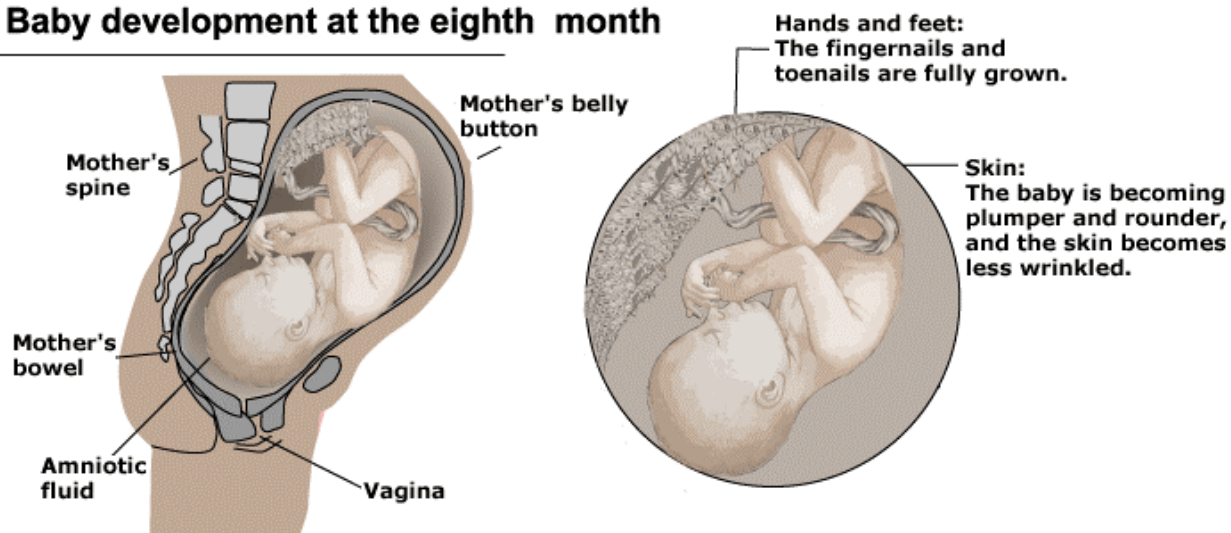
At your checkups, the doctor or midwife will check on the growth of your baby and ask if your baby is moving or kicking regularly.

It is important that you rest as much as you can with your feet elevated, especially if you have swelling in your feet or ankles. From now on you should avoid lying flat on your back because in this position the weight of the baby and the uterus place pressure on major blood vessels and may cause you to feel faint.

Your baby

Your baby can now tell the difference between dark and light and their skin is becoming smoother and less wrinkled.

Baby development at the eighth month



Week 35

You

You may find that you need to urinate (pass water) more often as your baby's head is pushing on your bladder. When you laugh, sneeze or cough, you may lose a small amount of urine. It is important that you do pelvic floor tightening exercises, as these will help you control your bladder more quickly after the baby is born. If you don't know how to do pelvic floor exercises, your doctor or midwife can teach you. Physiotherapists also have a range of exercises for the pelvic floor. If you go to antenatal education classes these will be explained. It is important to do these exercises for the rest of your life. To find out more about pelvic floor exercises see [Staying well - Pelvic floor exercises](#).

Your baby

Measuring about 44 cm in length and weighing around 2.5 kg, your baby is now almost fully grown.

Week 36

You

Your baby's head may begin to move down or engage into your pelvis about this time. You will find that breathing is easier once your baby's head is engaged, as your baby's bottom will no longer be pressing up against your lungs.

Around 4 in every 100 babies remain in the breech position at the end of the pregnancy. A breech position means the baby has their bottom down instead of their head. If your baby stays in this position some doctors may attempt to turn the baby to a head down position for the birth. If the baby cannot be turned, the birth may need to be by Caesarean.

Your baby

Your baby is almost fully mature now.

Week 37

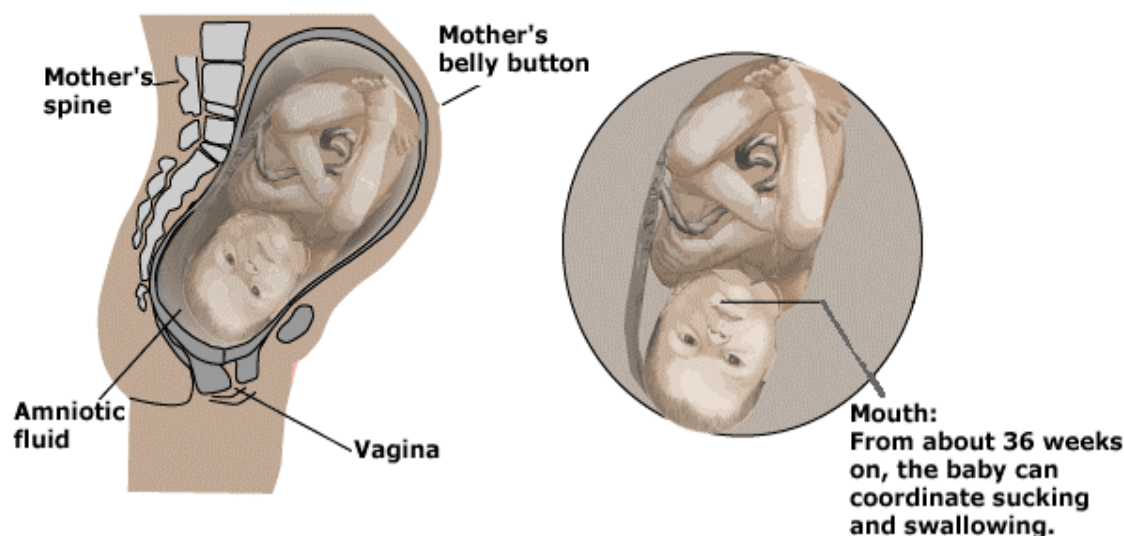
You

Your pattern of sleep may be troubled and you may find it hard to get comfortable in bed. It might be helpful to use pillows between your knees and to support your abdomen as you lie on your side.

Your baby

Your baby is now about 50 cm long, and may practise breathing movements, but of course there is no air in their lungs yet.

Baby development at the ninth month



Week 38

You

Your baby may be moving a little less now and instead of whole body movements, you may only notice jabs from their foot or knee. You may also feel a sensation inside your vagina as your baby's head is moving against your pelvic floor muscles.

Your baby

Your baby may be putting on 100 g a week at this stage, and now weighs around 2.9 kilograms.

Week 39

You

Your cervix is softening in readiness for labour. You may also be experiencing quite strong Braxton Hicks contractions. You may be feeling very heavy and weary and just waiting for the baby to hurry up and arrive.

Your baby

Your baby's sucking and breathing reflexes are now well established and they are fully ready for life in the outside world.

Week 40

You

Although your due date has arrived remember that your labour may begin one or two weeks either side of this date.

Your baby

By full-term, your baby should weight about 2.7 to 3.5 kg, although full-term babies can weight anything from 2.5 to 5 kg, and measure 35 to 38 cm from crown to rump and 44 to 55 cm from the baby's head to its toes. These are just average figures, and there can be wide variation in the measurements.
