

We Skoolhouse

Fetal Development





During pregnancy, maternal wellness is paramount, and regular prenatal visits are essential for monitoring both the mother's and the baby's health. Typically, prenatal appointments are scheduled once a month during the first 28 weeks, twice a month from weeks 28 to 36, and weekly from week 36 until delivery. These visits include a range of routine checks, such as measuring blood pressure, weight, and fetal heartbeat, as well as conducting urine tests to detect potential issues like preeclampsia or gestational diabetes.

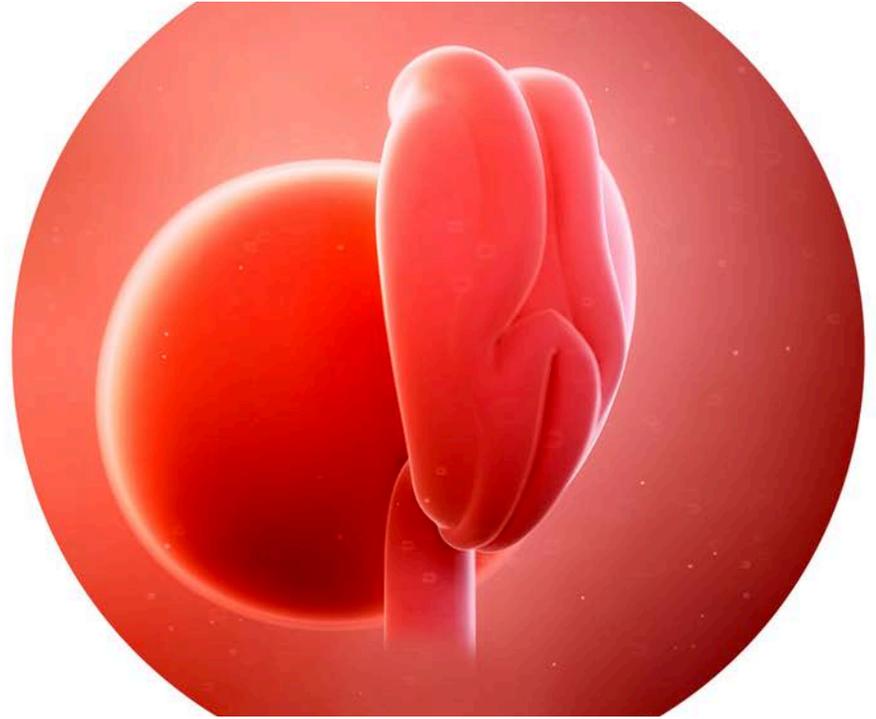
First Trimester Wellness Visits focus on confirming the pregnancy, estimating the due date, and conducting initial screenings and blood tests. Mothers will receive guidance on nutrition, prenatal vitamins (especially folic acid), and lifestyle changes to support a healthy pregnancy. Discussing any pre-existing medical conditions and medications with healthcare providers is crucial for ensuring safety.

Second Trimester Wellness Visits typically involve more detailed ultrasounds to monitor fetal development and screen for any anomalies. This is also the time for the glucose screening test to check for gestational diabetes. Expectant mothers might start feeling the baby's movements, and discussing any concerns or symptoms, such as back pain or swelling, with their healthcare provider is important. This trimester is also a good time to start exploring childbirth classes and creating a birth plan.

Third Trimester Wellness Visits become more frequent to closely monitor the baby's position and growth. Healthcare providers will check for signs of preterm labor and discuss labor and delivery options. During these visits, expectant mothers should continue discussing their birth plan and any last-minute concerns or questions. It's also a good time to finalize preparations for the baby's arrival, such as setting up the nursery and packing a hospital bag. Regular check-ups ensure that any complications can be promptly addressed, helping to ensure a healthy delivery for both mother and baby.

Fetal Development: Weeks 1-4

During the first four weeks of pregnancy, the embryo is rapidly developing from a fertilized egg into a complex organism. At this stage, the embryo is tiny, resembling a cluster of cells, and is too small to be visible to the naked eye.



Common symptoms during the first four weeks of pregnancy may include fatigue, breast tenderness, and nausea. To alleviate these symptoms, try getting plenty of rest, wearing a supportive bra, and eating small, frequent meals. Staying hydrated & consuming ginger or peppermint tea may help ease nausea.



Mothers can support healthy development by taking prenatal vitamins with folate, avoiding harmful substances like alcohol and tobacco, and maintaining a balanced diet rich in nutrients.

Fetal Development: Weeks 5-8

By the fifth week, the embryo begins to develop basic structures such as the heart, brain, and spinal cord. It grows to about the size of a sesame seed by week 5 and progresses to the size of a blueberry by week 8.



Symptoms like fatigue, nausea, and increased urination are common. To alleviate fatigue, try to prioritize rest and relaxation. Eating small, frequent meals and avoiding spicy or greasy foods can help manage nausea. Increasing fluid intake and avoiding caffeine may also help reduce urinary frequency.



To support healthy fetal development, mothers should continue taking prenatal vitamins, attend regular prenatal check-ups, and practice stress-reducing activities such as meditation or gentle exercise.

Fetal Development: Weeks 9-12

During weeks 9-12, the embryo transitions into a fetus, and major organs and systems continue to develop and mature. By week 12, the fetus is approximately the size of a plum.



Symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, and food cravings or aversions may emerge. To alleviate fatigue, continue to prioritize rest, and consider exercises like walking or prenatal yoga to boost energy. Eating small, frequent meals and choosing bland, easy-to-digest foods may help with nausea and food aversions.



Support fetal development by staying physically active, eating a nutritious diet, and getting plenty of rest. It's also important to communicate with the baby by talking or singing softly, as this can help stimulate early auditory development.

Fetal Development: Weeks 13-16

From weeks 13 to 16, the fetus grows rapidly, and its body systems become more complex and functional. By week 16, the fetus is about the size of an avocado. Facial features become more distinct, and the fetus starts to make small movements that can sometimes be felt by the mother.



Many women notice an increase in energy levels during this period, so staying active with gentle exercises, like swimming or prenatal yoga, can help maintain overall fitness and well-being. Hormonal changes may lead to skin changes such as darkening nipples or linea nigra (dark line running down the abdomen). Use gentle skincare products (e.g. coconut oil & shea butter) and stay hydrated.



Support fetal development by taking moments to relax and feel little movements. This can enhance the emotional connection and provide some reassurance of the baby's growth and well-being.

Fetal Development: Weeks 17-20

During weeks 17 to 20, the fetus continues to grow and develop sensory abilities. By week 20, the fetus is about the size of a banana. This period is characterized by significant brain development and the maturation of sensory organs, enabling the fetus to respond to light, sound, and touch.



Many women begin to feel the baby's movements, often described as flutters or "quickening." Enjoy these moments as they signify the baby's growth and activity. The growing uterus may cause physical changes such as backaches or leg cramps. Incorporate stretching exercises, proper posture, and prenatal massage to alleviate discomfort.



Support fetal development by gently tapping on the belly which can elicit responses from the baby, enhancing bonding. Encourage family members to participate in these bonding activities and speak so the baby can hear voices.

Fetal Development: Weeks 21-24

From weeks 21 to 24, the fetus's organs and systems continue to mature, and it starts to gain weight rapidly. By week 24, the fetus is about the size of an ear of corn. This period is crucial for lung development & the formation of taste buds.



You may start to experience Braxton Hicks contractions, which are normal and help prepare the uterus for labor. Stay hydrated and rest as needed. Swelling in the legs and ankles may occur due to increased blood volume and pressure on veins. Elevate your legs when possible and wear supportive footwear.



Establish a routine of talking, singing, or reading to the baby at specific times of the day. This consistency can be soothing and foster early bonding. You may even encourage family and friends to interact with the baby through touch and sound, creating a connection even before birth.

Fetal Development: Weeks 25-28

During weeks 25 to 28, the fetus undergoes rapid growth and brain development. By week 28, the fetus is about the size of a large eggplant. The eyes start to open, and the fetus can respond to light and sound more distinctly. This period also marks significant lung development, preparing the baby for breathing after birth.



As the baby grows and the uterus expands, it may press against the diaphragm, causing shortness of breath. Practice deep breathing exercises and maintain good posture to alleviate this discomfort. Finding a comfortable sleeping position may become challenging. Use pillows to support your belly and back, and try sleeping on your side, preferably the left side, to improve circulation.



Shine a flashlight on your belly and see if your baby moves in response to the light. This interaction supports sensory development and enhances bonding.

Fetal Development: Weeks 29-32

From weeks 29 to 32, the fetus continues to grow and gain weight, reaching about the size of a butternut squash by week 32. The brain and nervous system are rapidly developing, and the fetus's movements become more coordinated. The bones are fully developed but remain soft and flexible.



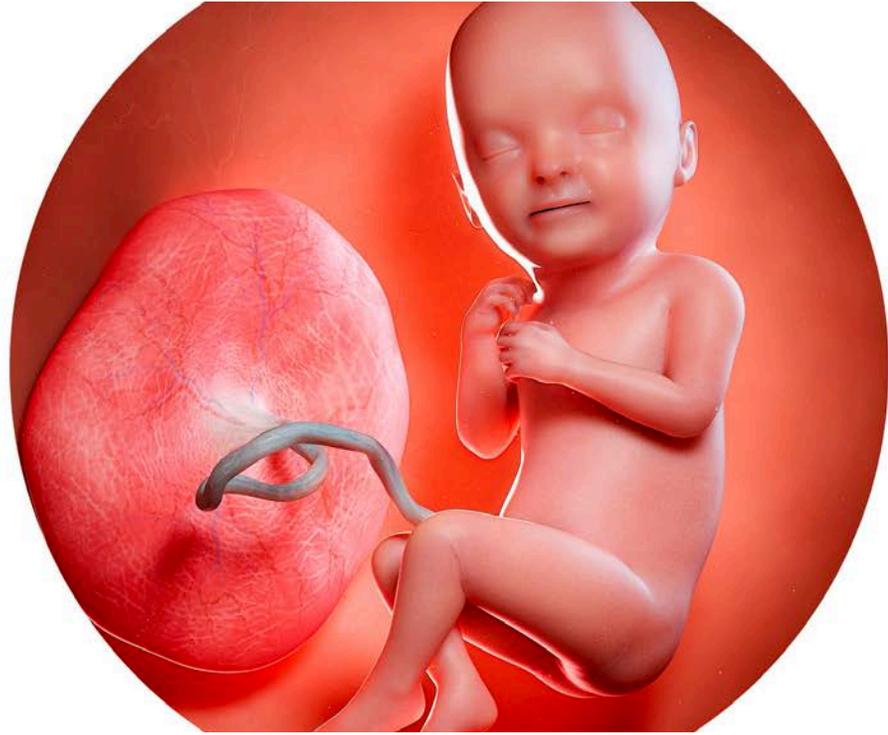
As the baby grows and the uterus expands, it can press on the stomach, causing heartburn and indigestion. Eat smaller, more frequent meals. Your growing baby can press on the bladder, leading to more frequent trips to the bathroom. Stay hydrated and plan bathroom breaks accordingly.



Continue talking, reading, and singing to the baby, as these familiar sounds can be comforting after birth, while continuously stimulating the developing senses.

Fetal Development: Weeks 33-36

During weeks 33 to 36, the fetus continues to grow and mature, reaching about the size of a pineapple by week 36. The lungs and brain are fully developed, and the fetus starts to gain weight rapidly. The baby is getting ready for birth, often moving into a head-down position.



Many moms may experience more frequent Braxton Hicks contractions. Stay hydrated and practice relaxation techniques to manage discomfort. Fatigue may also return as the body prepares for labor. Prioritize rest and take short naps if and when needed.



Gently touch and massage your belly, feeling the baby's movements and enhancing the emotional connection. Continue to involve family members in bonding activities, creating a supportive and connected environment for the baby's arrival.

Fetal Development: Weeks 37-40

From weeks 37 to 40, the fetus is considered full-term and continues to gain weight, reaching about the size of a watermelon by week 40. The baby's organs are fully developed and ready for life outside the womb. The baby will continue to grow and gain weight until birth.



Many women experience a surge of energy and the urge to prepare the home for the baby. Use this time to finalize preparations but avoid overexertion. Be aware of signs of labor, such as regular contractions, water breaking, and lower back pain. Keep in touch with your provider and have your hospital bag ready.



Prioritize self-care, including rest, hydration, and healthy eating, to ensure you are physically and mentally prepared for labor and delivery. Practice relaxation and breathing techniques to prepare for labor. These can help you stay calm and focused during the birthing process - **Wishing you & baby a safe delivery!**