

Month-by-month pregnancy care guide



Months 1 and 2: Confirming pregnancy and starting care

In the first two months, many people notice a missed period, tender breasts, nausea, tiredness, or needing to urinate more often. Some people have very few symptoms. After a positive pregnancy test, contact a doctor, midwife, or clinic to plan your first prenatal visit. Prenatal means care during pregnancy.

Your care team may ask about your health history, medicines, past pregnancies, and lifestyle. They may discuss a due date, which is an estimate of when the baby may arrive. They may also recommend blood tests, urine tests, and an ultrasound, which is a scan that uses sound waves to look at the pregnancy.

Start or continue a prenatal vitamin if your healthcare professional recommends it.

Avoid alcohol, smoking, vaping, and recreational drugs, and ask for help if stopping feels hard.

Ask before taking any medicine, supplement, or herbal product.

Month 3: Early growth and first-trimester checks

By the third month, the baby's major body systems are forming, and your body is

working hard. Nausea may begin to ease for some people, while tiredness may continue. Mood changes are also common because of hormones, sleep changes, and normal worries.

Your healthcare team may talk with you about screening tests. A screening test estimates the chance of certain conditions; it does not diagnose a condition. If a result needs follow-up, your care team will explain the next steps.

Eat small, simple meals if nausea is bothering you.

Drink water often, especially if you are vomiting.

Ask what symptoms are normal and what symptoms need a call.

Month 4: More energy and steady prenatal visits

In the fourth month, some people feel more energy and less nausea. Your belly may start to show. You may also notice stretching feelings in the lower belly as the uterus, the muscle where the baby grows, gets larger.

Prenatal visits often include checking your blood pressure, weight, and urine, and listening for the baby's heartbeat when appropriate. Your provider may discuss healthy weight gain, food safety, and gentle exercise. Walking, stretching, and pregnancy-safe movement can be helpful for many people, but ask what is safe for you.

Good foods during pregnancy include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, dairy or calcium-rich alternatives, and protein foods such as eggs, fish low in mercury, poultry, or tofu. If food access is hard, tell your care team; support programs may be available.

Month 5: Mid-pregnancy scan and baby movements

Many people have a detailed ultrasound around mid-pregnancy. This scan checks the baby's growth and looks at body parts such as the brain, heart, spine, and limbs. It may also check the placenta, which is the organ that helps pass oxygen and nutrients to the baby.

You may begin to feel baby movements, sometimes called quickening. At first, movements can feel like flutters, bubbles, or gentle taps. If you are unsure

what you are feeling, ask your provider. It is also common to have backache, leg cramps, or heartburn as your body changes.

Wear comfortable shoes and support your back when sitting.

Try smaller meals if heartburn occurs.

Keep a list of questions for your next visit.

Month 6: Comfort, screening, and planning ahead

During the sixth month, your baby continues to grow, and you may feel stronger movements. Your care team may discuss screening for gestational diabetes, which is high blood sugar that starts during pregnancy. If testing is recommended, your provider will explain how it works and what results mean.

This is a helpful time to think about childbirth education, feeding plans, and support after birth. You do not need to have every answer now. It is okay to learn slowly and ask for clear explanations.

Pay attention to your emotional health. Feeling worried sometimes is common, but ongoing sadness, panic, hopelessness, or trouble functioning is a reason to talk with a healthcare professional. Help is available.

Month 7: Third trimester begins

The seventh month begins the third trimester, the final part of pregnancy. Prenatal visits usually become more frequent as your due date gets closer. Your provider may check growth, blood pressure, swelling, and symptoms.

You may feel more tired again. Sleep may be harder because of bathroom trips, baby movement, or discomfort. Rest when you can, use pillows for support, and ask your care team about safe sleep positions during pregnancy.

Learn the signs of preterm labor, which means labor before 37 weeks.

Discuss vaccines recommended during pregnancy with your provider.

Begin planning transportation, childcare for older children, and who to call during labor.

Month 8: Preparing for birth and newborn care

In month eight, the baby is gaining weight, and you may feel pressure in your pelvis. Braxton Hicks contractions may happen. These are practice tightenings of the uterus. They are often irregular and may improve with rest or fluids, but you should contact your care team if contractions become painful, regular, or concerning.

Talk about your birth preferences with your doctor or midwife. Birth plans can include who you want with you, pain relief options, movement during labor, and feeding preferences. Plans can change for safety, so it helps to stay flexible.

Pack a hospital or birth center bag, choose a baby doctor if needed, and make sure you know when and where to go when labor starts.

Month 9: Final checks and labor signs

In the last month, visits are often weekly. Your care team may check the baby's position and discuss labor signs. Labor may include regular contractions that get stronger and closer together, water breaking, or bloody mucus discharge called a show. If you are unsure whether labor has started, call your maternity unit or provider.

Keep watching your baby's movements and tell your provider right away if they decrease or feel very different. Do not wait until the next appointment if something feels wrong.

Use this month to rest, accept help, prepare simple meals, and review postpartum needs. Postpartum means the time after birth. You will still need care after the baby arrives, especially for bleeding, pain, mood, feeding, and recovery.