

What to Expect at 16 Weeks of Pregnancy: Preparing for Labor and Self-Care



Highlights

Marks the end of the 4th month of pregnancy.

Early discomforts such as nausea, abdominal tension, and mood swings usually subside.

The fetus measures about 108-116 mm and weighs around 80 g, similar in size to an avocado.

Noticeable weight gain and appetite increase are common at this stage.

The uterus expands, causing visible changes in the abdomen.

First fetal movements may be felt.

Screening tests such as the triple test and, in certain cases, amniocentesis may be offered.

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Maternal Well-being and Physical Changes

A healthy increase in appetite after the decline of early pregnancy nausea.
Noticeable weight gain, averaging up to 3 kg since conception.
A more visible abdominal bump, often difficult to conceal.
Frequent urination, as the growing uterus presses on the bladder.
Occasional shortness of breath, caused by uterine pressure on the diaphragm.
A temporary pregnancy-related nasal congestion (physiological rhinitis).
The first gentle fetal movements, often described as light flutters.

Fetal Development at 16 Weeks

Size and weight: ~108-116 mm in length, ~80 g in weight.
Skeletal system: Bones strengthen; muscles develop.
Movements: Limbs move more actively; facial muscles allow frowning, yawning, and opening/closing of the mouth.
Neck control: Improved strength allows head movement side to side.
Organs in function: The liver, kidneys, bladder, stomach, intestines, and gallbladder are active.
Cardiovascular system: Heart rate averages 150 bpm, pumping ~25 liters of blood per day.
External features: Mouth, ears, eyes, eyelashes, and eyebrows are well-formed.

End of the Fourth Month

Sexual Activity During Pregnancy

Ultrasound at 16 Weeks

Fetal size (~117 mm, 80 g).

Active movements and reactions to stimuli.

Facial and skeletal structures.

In some cases, the baby's sex, though accuracy is not guaranteed.

Laboratory Tests and Screenings

Triple test: Evaluates hCG, estriol, and alpha-fetoprotein to screen for developmental abnormalities.

Amniocentesis: Conducted only when medically indicated.

Doppler ultrasound: May be recommended if maternal or fetal health concerns arise.

Possible Complications and Warning Signs

Missed Miscarriage

Maternal infections.

Rh incompatibility.

Low progesterone levels.

Genetic abnormalities.

Lifestyle and environmental factors.

Body Pains and Spasms

Rib and lower back pain.

Abdominal cramps from stretching muscles.

Headaches from circulatory changes.

Leg pain and swelling.

Vaginal Discharge and Bleeding

Normal: Mild increase, clear or whitish.

Watery: May suggest amniotic fluid leakage.

Thick/curd-like: Could indicate yeast infection.

Yellowish with odor: Possible infection.

Bloody: Requires urgent medical care.

Fever, Cold, and Infections

Safe approaches: Adequate hydration, rest, gargling, saline rinses.

Medication: Paracetamol may be used under supervision.

Avoid: Aspirin, saunas, and mustard plasters. Seek medical attention if temperature rises above 37.5-38°C.

Lifestyle and Self-Care Recommendations

Choose comfortable clothing and footwear made from natural fabrics.

Take daily walks to improve oxygen supply and well-being.

Eat balanced meals rich in calcium, iron, fiber, and vitamins.

Practice gentle self-massage with safe oils to help prevent stretch marks.

Sleep on the side, preferably the left, to reduce pressure on the uterus.

Nutrition Guidelines

Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day.

Prioritize whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meat, fish, and dairy.

Drink at least 2 liters of water daily.

Avoid alcohol, caffeine, unwashed produce, and raw/undercooked foods.

Tools and Assistance

Nutritional planners and meal trackers for balanced diet management.

Pregnancy apps to track development and symptoms.

Prenatal yoga or fitness classes for safe activity.

Online and local support groups for emotional well-being.

Home health tools (blood pressure monitor, weight scale).