



Weeks 23-26

WEEK 23

Baby's 8 to 9 inches long

How baby grows

Your baby continues to grow and by the end of this week will measure about 8 to 9 inches long. By week 23 your baby is taking on the shape of a full-term baby, but her bones and organs are still visible beneath a thin layer of translucent skin.

Your baby's looking more like she will at birth! Translucent skin continues to develop, and fat deposits increase to help the skin look smoother.

Other developments this week:

- More movement. She'll begin moving around more than ever, stretching and flexing the muscles in her arms and legs, fingers and toes.
- Skin tone. Skin pigment is being deposited this week to create your baby's skin tone.

How you change

- **More bathroom breaks.** As your uterus gets larger, it rests on top of the bladder, increasing your need to urinate frequently.
- **Isolated pains.** As you approach the end of your second trimester, your growing uterus may trigger more back pain, pelvic pressure, leg cramps and headaches.
- **Trouble sleeping.** The closer you get to your delivery date, the more wakeful you may become. Anxiety, frequent urination, heartburn and general discomfort may result in restless nights. This uneasiness will most likely stop once your little one arrives.

WEEK 24

What a set of lungs!

How baby grows

Lung development takes a big leap forward this week as your baby prepares herself for a big cry upon arrival. Her lungs begin to produce surfactant, a wetting agent that will help her breathe correctly and keep her tiny lungs from collapsing or sticking together.

Blood vessels and air sacs are developing in the lungs and will eventually exchange oxygen and circulate it to all parts of her body.

She still has a lot of growing to do. At 1.2 pounds and 8 to 9 inches long, she may add at least another 5 pounds before birth for optimum health.

This week the following developments may occur:

- **Inner ear.** This will become fully formed. Controlling balance, the inner ear means that your baby may be able to tell when she is upside down or right side up while floating in the amniotic fluid.
- **Touch.** She will continue to explore her internal environment, flexing her fingers and touching her surroundings.

How you change

- **Heartburn.** As your baby continues to grow, you may begin to get heartburn. During pregnancy heartburn is caused by hormonal and physical changes in your body. The growing baby can also push stomach acid up into the esophagus.
- You can help ease heartburn by eating five or six small nutritious meals a day. Also, try to avoid going to sleep right after eating.
- **Testing for gestational diabetes.** Your doctor may recommend testing for gestational diabetes, a temporary type of diabetes that can occur during pregnancy. Women with gestational diabetes tend to have abnormally large babies, which can lead to difficulties during labor. In addition, gestational diabetes can cause low blood sugar and other problems in the baby after

birth.

Good to know

If your blood sugar level is above a certain level, you'll have further tests. Gestational diabetes usually can be controlled with a special diet under your doctor's supervision.

WEEK 25

Baby's got a lot of nerve

How baby grows

At 1-1/2 pounds and a length of about 8 to 10 inches, your baby is growing at a steady pace.

The umbilical cord is thick and resilient now, covered in a firm, slippery substance that prevents kinking and knotting and may regulate the blood flow between placenta and baby.

During this week your baby is spending more time preparing for life after birth. Nerves around her mouth and lip area are becoming more sensitive, preparing her for that all-important task of finding a nipple and getting nourishment.

This week you could expect:

- **Fist-making.** She will begin curling her fingers into a fist.
- **Dexterity.** This will continue to develop as your baby learns how to control her hands.
- **Exploration.** She'll continue to explore her surroundings, including the umbilical cord.
- **Spinal structure.** Your baby's spinal structure will begin to form.
- **Open nostrils.** Your baby's nostrils begin to open.

How you change

- **Light sensitivity.** Your eyes may become sensitive to light, feeling gritty and dry. This is a perfectly normal pregnancy symptom called dry-eye. To ease your discomfort, try using an "artificial tears" solution.
- **Indigestion continues.** You may develop (or continue to experience) indigestion. This is caused by the hormone progesterone slowing down the emptying of the stomach to allow for increased absorption of nutrients for your baby. Eating smaller, more frequent meals, and avoiding spicy and fatty foods may help ease this condition.

Getting bigger!

How baby grows

Between now and Week 29 your baby will have a growth spurt and gain another pound. As your baby grows, space gets tighter inside the womb. Your baby now measures about 12.8 inches long and probably weighs almost 2 pounds.

Most of this weight is bone and tissue because she still doesn't have much body fat. In fact the main development of body fat doesn't really occur until late in the third trimester.

Developments that occur this week:

- **Eyelashes.** These begin to grow as your baby begins to blink and open her eyes.
- **More hair.** Hair continues to grow on her head.
- **Spine.** To support her growing body, your baby's spine is getting stronger and more flexible.
- **Plumping up.** Although she hasn't put on much fat, she is beginning to look a little plumper.

How you change

- **Weight gain.** You've probably gained from 16 to 20 pounds by now, which includes your baby's weight, plus the weight of the placenta, enlarged uterus and breasts, amniotic fluid, and additional blood volume. There is also typical fat storage in mom's body that averages 4 to 7 pounds.
- **Additional isolated pain.** As the uterus enlarges and your baby gets bigger, you may notice more back pain, pelvic pressure, leg cramps, and headaches. Be sure to report any pains that even remotely feel like contractions to your doctor. Preterm labor (beginning before the baby is fully developed) is much easier to stop in the early stages.
- **Your baby's moving around.** By now you can probably feel your baby moving every day, although not all babies are equally active. If you become concerned during those moments when you can't feel your baby move, try lying on your left side and being still. It's usually easier to feel fetal movement in that position.