



Weeks 32-36

WEEK 32

Baby's changing her look

How baby grows

Your baby's appearance changes rapidly this week. Most of the wrinkles disappear from her face, and there may be a lot of hair on her head. In fact as the lanugo hair on her body begins to fall off, the hair on her head grows even faster. By week 32 some babies already have a thick head of hair while others have only a few strands.

Your baby is now about 4 pounds — an incredible increase of almost 2 pounds from last month—and about 15.5 inches long.

Other developments this week:

- **Nails.** Your baby will have completely formed fingernails and toenails.
- **Head movement.** She can turn her head from side to side.
- **Organs continue to mature.**
- **Sucking.** Your little one's sucking muscles have matured and enable her to latch on and breastfeed once she arrives. A good sucking pattern is also a sign of good brain and muscle development.
- **Dreaming.** Her sleep will now include both REM and non-REM sleep stages. REM stands for "rapid eye movement," the dreaming stage of sleep.

How you change

- **Weight gain.** You've probably gained about 3 to 4 pounds this month. Don't be alarmed—gaining a pound a week is quite normal during the last trimester because your baby's demand for nourishment increases as she experiences her final growth spurt before birth.
- **Numb and/or sensitive spots.** As the skin on your belly expands, you may notice numb spots or highly sensitive areas on your upper abdomen or rib cage. This is because as your skin stretches, the nerve fibers in it stretch too. This can create extremely sensitive or insensitive areas on the skin, but this sensation will cease once your baby arrives.

WEEK 33

Getting a sense of things

How baby grows

In these last few weeks, billions of your baby's brain cells are helping her to learn about her environment. These cells help her to listen, feel and see.

This is another important week for visual development. By now your baby may be able to experience her surroundings visually, since the pupils can now detect some light. Her pupils constrict and dilate to allow your baby to see dim shapes.

Your baby now weighs about 4.4 pounds and is about 16.4 inches long from head to toe. She'll gain a good deal of her weight in the final few weeks before birth.

Other developments this week:

- **Head.** Your baby's head size will increase about 3/8 of an inch in circumference this week.
- **Sleep time.** Your little one now sleeps much of the time.
- **Lungs are continuing to mature.**
- **Weight gain.** Fat will continue to be added on to your baby's body for protection and warmth.
- **Testicles.** For most boys, the testicles have now moved into the scrotum.

How you change

- **Head-down position.** By this time the fetus should have turned around and begun to point head-down in the direction of the cervix. This will provide more space in the upper abdomen, making it easier for you to breathe. If you're a first-time mom, your child's head may move into the pelvis this week and press firmly against your cervix—this happens to about half of all first-time moms. If you've already had at least one child, this probably won't happen until about a week before labor. For some experienced moms, the baby won't move into position until the advanced

stages of labor.

- **Weight gain.** If you're gaining a pound a week now and your weight gain ranges from 22 to 28 pounds, you're right on track. Just about half of that weight goes right to the fetus. In fact the baby gains more than half its birth weight during the next seven weeks. Be sure not to stop eating or start skipping meals as your weight increases. Both of you need the calories and nutrition of a healthy diet.
- **Swelling.** Although some swelling during the last trimester is completely normal, a sudden increase in swelling, combined with headaches, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting should prompt you to contact your doctor immediately. These symptoms could be the signs of preeclampsia. Early diagnosis can help combat this complication.

WEEK 34

No more floating

How baby grows

As of this week your baby has grown so large, she takes up most of the available space inside the uterus and can no longer float around your womb. Your baby is now about 4.7 pounds and about 16.8 inches long.

This week, many babies have moved themselves into the correct “head-down” position for delivery indicating baby is getting ready for birth.

More developments this week:

- **Adrenal glands.** Your baby's adrenal glands grow and produce corticoid hormones. Together with prolactin from the pituitary, they will stimulate lactation.
- **Skin.** The vernix coating on your baby's skin grows thicker to better protect her. Your baby's skin gradually becomes less red and wrinkled as the fat beneath it fills out and stretches the skin.
- **Skull.** Her skull bones are still quite pliable and not completely fused together at the top of her head. That will make it easy for her to slip down the relatively narrow birth canal.

How you change

- **Position check.** Your doctor will want to check your baby's position in the womb. Because she's grown much larger, she's now tucked up and has probably moved into the proper head down position for birth. However, as late as week 34 a small percent of babies are still facing the other way, with their bottoms or legs toward the cervix. This is called a "breech presentation." At this late stage a baby can't usually turn around on her own, so your doctor will probably try to coax her into position by manipulating your lower abdomen. This should be performed in a hospital so you and baby can be monitored during the process.
- **Puffiness.** You may have some additional puffiness in your feet, hands, face and ankles, especially during the evening or a warm spell. This puffiness is most likely caused by water retention. It may seem odd, but drinking more water can help ease water retention. If you're not getting enough water, your body sees your dehydration as a threat to your survival and begins to hold on to every drop.
- **Contractions.** Braxton Hicks ("false labor") contractions may also intensify this week. Relax—it doesn't mean true labor is beginning. Increased pressure from your baby's head may make it seem as if she could suddenly emerge at any moment. This usually means your baby is pushing lower than usual into your pelvis. Be sure to talk to your doctor if you have any concerns at all.
 - This increased pressure also may cause a harmless numb or tingling feeling in the pelvic area. If you find it uncomfortable, you can try lying

on your left side to help ease pressure. Lying on your left side is the best position, because it removes the pressure on arteries caused by your expanding uterus. Your doctor will continue to measure your uterus. It's important that your uterus enlarges at an appropriate, consistent rate.

WEEK 35

She's adding healthy fat

How baby grows

Your baby will begin to gain weight more rapidly than ever ... adding about an ounce each day from this point forward. Fat is being deposited all over your baby's body, especially around the shoulders.

In week 35 the average baby weighs around 5 to 6 pounds and measures about 16 to 19 inches in length.

Because of her size, your baby may move around less as her surroundings become more cramped. Her head may be resting on your pubic bone in preparation for labor and delivery.

Other developments taking place this week:

- **Central nervous system will continue to mature.**

- **Lungs.** The lungs will most likely be fully developed by Week 35.
- **Activity.** Your baby develops daily activity cycles. You may notice she is often more active at night, when you're trying to rest.
- **Respiratory and digestive systems.** Even though they won't be considered full-term until the end of the 40th week, your baby's respiratory and digestive systems are nearly mature.
- **Immune system starts to develop.**
- **Umbilical cord.** It's now about 20 inches long and approaching 1/2 inch in diameter. At birth it will be about 2 feet long and a 1/2-inch thick.

How you change

- **Weekly doctor visits.** Your doctor will probably want to start seeing you every week until you deliver. Starting now your doctor may begin regularly checking your cervix, looking for effacement and dilation rates and to check your baby's position. "Effacement" refers to how much your cervix has stretched and thinned, and "dilation" means how much the cervix is starting to open so your baby can move through the birth canal. (A cervix is fully dilated at 10 centimeters.)
- Between Weeks 35 and 37 your doctor also may test you for Group B streptococcus, an infection that can be passed on to newborns during birth.

WEEK 36

Gaining weight for the big day

How baby grows

Your baby now weighs 6 pounds and is 20.7 inches long.

Your baby works hard to accumulate all the fat she can in preparation for delivery. Her body grows rounder every day, since about 15 percent of her total weight is now made up of fat. Once she's born, this fat layer will help her maintain her body temperature and give her a reliable energy source.

Developments this week:

- **Organs.** Development of major organs such as the kidneys and liver is complete.
- **Lungs.** Some fine-tuning, such as the final development of the lungs, still takes place inside the womb.
- **Head.** Your baby's head is round, but by the time she makes it through the birth canal it may be temporarily misshapen as powerful contractions compress the soft bones of the skull. Her head shape will return to normal within a few days.

How you change

- **Weight gain.** You'll probably continue to gain weight, although the majority of your pregnancy weight gain has occurred.
- **Heartburn.** If you've been experiencing heartburn, the baby's movement down toward your cervix may ease it. Your appetite may return because the baby is no longer putting as much pressure on your stomach and intestines.
- **Movements may change or cease.** As your baby grows larger and amniotic fluid volume decreases, it's not as easy for her to move. It may feel as if the baby isn't moving as much as before, but everything is usually fine. Things are just getting a bit crowded!