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## Professionals for Women's Health



### FETAL DEVELOPMENT

This section describes the development of your baby as well as the changes you go through as your pregnancy progresses. We discuss many issues with you at your regular appointments. Please feel free to ask your provider any other questions you have.

#### 4 Weeks

At this point, the embryo is less than a quarter- inch long. The first body segments on the baby that eventually become the brain and spinal cord. The heart, blood circulation, and digestive tract take shape. At this time, you miss your first period. Your breasts become tender and enlarged. Chronic fatigue and urinary frequency may begin, persisting for three or more months.

#### 8 Weeks

Development of the embryo is rapid. The baby's heart begins to pump blood and limb buds are well developed. Facial features and major divisions of the brain are discernible. The baby's ears develop from skin folds; tiny bones and muscles are formed beneath the thin skin. By this time, the embryo has grown to nearly two inches in length. Morning sickness may persist for 12 weeks, and your uterus changes from pear to globular shape. You may notice an increase in vaginal discharge. Usually, there is no weight gain.

Depending on when you started our prenatal care, we will discuss alpha fetal protein (AFP) information with you between weeks 11-14.

#### 12 Weeks

The embryo becomes a fetus. Its beating heart is discernible by Doppler. The baby assumes a more human shape as the lower body develops. The organs begin to differentiate, and the kidneys start to produce urine. His or her facial features and limbs become more distinct, and fingers, toes, ears, and eyelids are formed.

The fetus weighs about one ounce and is three inches in length. Your uterus rises above the pelvic brim.

If you choose to have the AFP blood test to rule out birth defects involving the brain and spinal cord, it is done anytime between 16 and 18 weeks. This test is optional, and we discuss the pros and cons with you.

#### 16 Weeks

The baby's musculoskeletal system has matured, and his or her nervous system begins to exert control. Blood vessels rapidly develop. The baby's fetal hands can grasp and the legs kick actively. The organs begin to mature and grow. At this point, the fetus weighs about seven ounces and is approximately six inches long. The fundus (top of uterus) is halfway between the pubis and navel. You gain about one pound per week, and you may begin to feel more energetic. You may notice an increase in vaginal secretions and may begin wearing maternity clothes. The pressure on the mother's bladder lessens, and urinary frequency decreases. You feel fetal movements (quickening) beginning between 16 and 22 weeks of gestation.

#### 20 Weeks

The baby's movements are stronger and more easily felt. The baby has grown to about 10 inches in length and weighs about 1/2 pound. Fine hair covers the body. The eyebrows, eyelashes and head hair develop. The fetus develops a regular schedule of sleeping, sucking and kicking. The fundus reaches the top of the navel. Your breasts may begin secreting colostrum.

An ultrasound is often done around 20 weeks. This ultrasound helps delineate fetal anatomy, placental position and fluid volume. During your appointment around weeks 20-24, you receive instructions about diabetic screening.

## 24 Weeks

The baby's skin appears red and wrinkled. The baby's skeleton develops rapidly as bone-forming cells increase activity. Respiratory movement begins. At this point, the fetus weighs about one pound, 10 ounces. The fundus is above the navel. You may begin to have backaches and leg cramps, as well as changes in your skin and abdominal itching.

## 28 Weeks

The fetus can breathe, swallow, and regulate temperature. His or her eyes may occasionally open for short periods of time. At this time, the baby is 2/3 of its birth size. Your fundus is halfway between the navel and the breast bone. The fetal outline may be palpable. Parents begin taking childbirth preparation classes around this time.

Blood is drawn for diabetic screening during your office visit around 28 weeks

If you are Rh negative, you also have your antibody screen drawn. This day you will also receive your injection of RhoGam.

At about 28 weeks gestation, your office visits change from every four weeks to every two weeks.

## 32 Weeks

The baby is now almost fully grown, and movements are strong enough to be visible from the outside. The baby's skin is no longer quite as wrinkled, and the baby is usually in the head-down position. Weight is around four pounds, and length is approximately 16 1/2 inches. Fundus reaches the bottom of the breast bone, and the mother's breasts are full and tender. Urinary frequency may return. You may have swollen ankles and sleeping problems.

You will also receive your pre-admission form for the hospital in which you desire to deliver at. We suggest that you tour labor and delivery units during this time.

## 36 Weeks

36 weeks gestation, you get postpartum instructions. Your scheduled appointments change from every two weeks to every week. We discuss labor and delivery issues, including your hospital choice, your preference for anesthesia, and procedures for when you go into labor (when to call, etc.).

## 38 Weeks

The entire uterus is occupied by the baby, thus making its movement less pronounced. Maternal antibodies are being transferred to the baby. This provides immunity for about six months until the infant's immune system can take over. The fetus descends deeper into your pelvis. The placenta is nearly four times as thick as it was 20 weeks ago. Backaches, urinary frequency and Braxton Hicks contractions intensify as your cervix and lower uterine segment prepare for labor.

Cervical checks begin to assess for dilation, effacement, and baby's position.

### When to Call PWHealth at 614-268-8800



#### Contractions

Call us when your contractions are approximately 5 to 6 minutes apart and last at least 60 seconds. If you are less than 32 weeks pregnant, call us if you have contractions, because you may be in premature labor.

#### Ruptured Membranes

Call us if your water breaks, even if you are leaking only a small amount of amniotic fluid.