

PRENATAL CHANGES (MOTHER)

FIRST TRIMESTER

Month 1

There are many signs and symptoms that help determine pregnancy.

A simple urine test from the doctor will show whether or not a woman is pregnant.

Home pregnancy tests are available for \$10-\$15 and are quite accurate, but are no substitute for a doctor's test or visit. (Most doctors will give their own test anyway!)

New symptoms:

Missed menstrual period: The first and most obvious change is missing a menstrual period. Usually with this symptom a woman will suspect pregnancy, although some women may miss two periods (if their cycle is not regular) before suspecting pregnancy.

Excessive saliva: Experts aren't sure, but the most likely culprit for excessive saliva is the one charged for so many other charming pregnancy woes: those pregnancy hormones.

Frequent urination: The amount of blood in your body increases dramatically when you get pregnant, which leads to a lot of extra fluid getting processed through your kidneys and ending up in your bladder. (that's why frequent urination happens in early pregnancy)

Breasts: Swollen, tender breasts are common in pregnancy. This may occur *before* the menstrual period is missed. The breasts will enlarge a lot during the first few months. Although nothing will prevent stretch marks, lotions can relieve the tightness and itching associated with pregnancy

Month 2

New symptoms:

Morning sickness/nausea: This probably occurs due to the change in hormones or a drop in blood level. Morning sickness does not just take place in the morning. Many women say it is associated with smells or foods they eat. Not much can be done to cure morning sickness. (Drugs or over-the-counter stomach remedies should not be taken.) Watching the diet can help relieve some of the symptoms. Your doctor may recommend eating several small meals throughout the day and/or eating something before getting out of bed, such as crackers. Also, there is a vitamin B6 shot the doctor can give that seems to help many women.

Fatigue: During the first trimester, a huge amount of energy goes into building a life-support system for your baby. This makes a mother tired!

Month 3

New symptoms:

Mood swings: It's perfectly normal to feel alternately elated and terrified about becoming a parent. Most mood swings are caused by changing hormones.

Month 4

New symptoms:

Round ligament pain: Your uterus is supported by thick bands of ligaments that run from the groin up the side of the abdomen. As your uterus grows the supporting ligaments stretch and thin out to accommodate the increasing weight. This weight pulls on the ligaments, causing sharp pains and/or dull aches in the lower abdomen.

Red swollen gums: Hormones cause your gums to swell, become inflamed, and bleed more easily.

Nasal congestion and swelling: High levels of estrogen and progesterone increase blood flow to all the body's mucous membranes, including the nose, causing them to swell and soften.

Cravings: But there may also be some truth to the notion that you crave what your body needs. Call your practitioner if you crave weird substances such as clay, ashes, or laundry starch. This craving, known as pica, may be a sign of a nutritional deficiency, particularly of iron.

Increased Appetite: During pregnancy is due to your baby growing and demanding more nourishment — and sending that message to you loud and clear.

Month 5

New symptoms:

Quickening: The first movements felt internally by the pregnant mother.

Abnormal dreams: First of all, you've got a lot on your mind, and on your plate. Dreams are one way that your subconscious works through that overload and comes to terms with the impending upheaval in your life. They can be an outlet for the all the conflicting emotions

Leg Cramps: Various theories blame fatigue from carrying pregnancy weight, compression of the blood vessels in the legs, and possibly diet — an excess of phosphorus and a shortage of calcium or magnesium to cause leg cramps

Backache: As your belly gets bigger throughout your pregnancy, your lower back curves more than usual to accommodate the load, resulting in strained muscles and pain.

Chloasma or the mask of pregnancy: Facial skin may darken due to changing hormones. This is called. Staying out of the sun can help but usually there is nothing that can be done to prevent it.

Month 6

New symptoms:

Sciatic nerve pain: Pressure from the uterus in the lower part of your spine, causing sharp, shooting pain, tingling, or numbness that starts in your buttocks and radiates down the back of your legs.

Stretch marks: Red, pink, or purplish streaks that appear across your belly, hips, thighs, and breasts during pregnancy. They're more pronounced on fair-skinned women. The stretching of your skin to its limits, plus a range of other factors, from heredity (if your mother had them, you'll probably get them, too) and the rate at which you gain your pregnancy weight.

Heart Burn: During pregnancy, the muscle at the top of the stomach that usually prevents digestive acids from backing up into the esophagus relaxes (like all those other muscles in your digestive tract — and everywhere else in your body). This allows those painfully acidic digestive juices to splash back up — causing irritation and burning.

Month 7

New Symptoms:

Shortness of breath: In your second trimester, hormones (the usual suspect) cause your respiratory center to increase the depth and frequency of your breathing, making you feel like you're sucking wind after nothing more strenuous than a trip to the fridge. In the third trimester, your expanding uterus and baby get in on the game, compressing your internal organs and keeping your lungs from fully expanding.

Month 8

New symptoms:

Braxton-Hicks contractions: Your uterine muscles are flexing in preparation for the big job they'll have to do in the near future.

Difficulty sleeping: Your changing body combined with all the symptoms make it difficult to get comfortable causing lack of sleep.

Month 9

New symptoms:

Lightening: Your baby may descend into the pelvis now (if he hasn't already). This is called engagement or lightening and usually occurs before labor in first time moms and during labor in subsequent births

Breast leakage: Many pregnant women find that their breasts begin to leak colostrum — a thin, yellowish fluid that is the precursor to mature breast milk.

DANGER SIGNALS

The doctor should be called immediately if any of these symptoms occur:

1. Vaginal bleeding.
2. Sharp abdominal pain or cramping.
3. Loss of fluid from the vagina.
4. Severe or prolonged nausea or vomiting.
5. Frequent dizzy spells.
6. Painful urination.
7. High fever over 100° F.
8. Vaginal discharge that is irritating.

Some other things to consider:

1. Do not take any medications unless approved by your doctor. This includes over-the-counter drugs.
2. No drugs or alcohol. These have a tremendous effect on the baby.
3. No X-rays. Radiation can interfere with cell division and organ development.
4. No saunas and hot tubs. The high and prolonged temperatures can be harmful to the fetus.
5. Vaccinations. Because vaccinations are live viruses, these should not be taken during pregnancy. However, do vaccinate the children in your home to protect them against these deadly diseases.
6. Cats. A parasite found in cats, cattle, sheep, and pigs can cause a disease in humans called toxoplasmosis. This can cause severe damage to an unborn child. Because of this risk, you should avoid undercooked meat and changing cat litter boxes.

The recommended weight gain for an average woman during pregnancy is 25 to 35 pounds. This weight is distributed as follows:

Baby—7 1/2 pounds

Placenta—1 1/2 pounds

Uterus—2 pounds

Amniotic fluid—1 1/2 pounds

Extra blood volume and water retention—4 1/2 pounds

Breast tissue—3 pounds

Maternal stores of protein—4 pounds