

Healthy expectations

Welcome to the third trimester

Week 28 marks the beginning of the third and final trimester of your pregnancy. With only 12 weeks to go, your baby:

- Measures 15 inches in length
- Weighs about 2 ½ pounds
- Is gaining body fat
- Has eye lashes and may blink his/her eyes
- May see filtered light in the womb
- Has increasing brain activity and may be having dreams

On average, women gain about 11 pounds in the final trimester. Physician visits are scheduled about every two weeks, and then weekly at about 36 weeks, to monitor your baby's growth and development. Your provider may also do additional testing for any disease or infection and will do a follow-up glucose test if your blood glucose level was high at previous visits. He/she will also monitor your blood pressure and check for protein in your urine to watch for preeclampsia.

Preeclampsia

Preeclampsia is a disorder diagnosed in expectant mothers with both high blood pressure and protein in their urine after 20 weeks. It affects as many as 8 percent of all pregnancies. The disorder only goes away after the baby is delivered. While some cases are mild and pose no threat if well managed, others can be potentially life-threatening and should be taken seriously.

Risk factors for preeclampsia

Women with any of the following risk factors are at a higher risk of developing preeclampsia:

- Having your first baby
- Family history of preeclampsia, especially with close or immediate family
- Being under 20 or over 40 years old
- Obesity, with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or higher

- Diabetes or kidney disease
- Chronic hypertension/high blood pressure
- Carrying twins or multiples
- Certain autoimmune diseases or blood-clotting disorders

Preeclampsia

- Severe upper abdominal pain
- Persistent headaches
- Vision changes
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Swelling of the face or excessive swelling of hands, feet or ankles

Contact your provider immediately if you notice any of the above symptoms as this disorder can come on quickly, with little warning, in these final weeks.

Prevention

At this point, more research is needed to determine what measures may be taken to help prevent preeclampsia. The best advice for expectant mothers is to keep up with your prenatal care and be sure to attend all scheduled appointments. Be aware of the warning signs and report any abnormalities to your physician immediately. Your provider will test for preeclampsia and will monitor you and your baby for any possible problems.

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Restless legs syndrome (RLS)

In the third trimester, some expectant mothers develop restless legs syndrome (RLS), which can cause tingling and twitching sensations in the lower legs, especially when at rest. The cause is unknown, but symptoms can be alleviated by reducing caffeine intake and massaging the legs. Your provider may also recommend iron supplements.

Tips for sleeping more comfortably during your pregnancy

With all the changes in your body, weight gain and your growing tummy, it can be difficult to get comfortable at night. The following tips may help you relax and feel more comfortable:

- Sleep on your left side to increase blood and nutrient flow to the placenta and help reduce foot and ankle swelling. Soft mattress pads can be used to reduce discomfort on the hips.
- Hold a pillow between your knees while sleeping to align your back and relieve pressure on your legs and hips. Also try placing pillows under your stomach for support, and behind your back.
- Try a maternity pillow or full-length body pillow.
- Reduce heartburn and stomach upset by sleeping with your upper body slightly elevated.

Resources

Below are a couple of online resources that our patients have found to be helpful. Please note that these sites are not intended to take the place of the care of your physician.

babycenter.com

cosprings.optum.com



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