



 **folkhälsan**

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www.folkhalsan.fi/pregnancydiary

BABY IN MIND

Pregnancy diary

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Where we start

Dear expecting family

You have started one of the most interesting and complex parts of your life – pregnancy and the time when the fetus develops inside the mother. This book gives an overview of your special journey, with helpful information to guide you during this exciting time. However, the most important part of the book comes from you: your thoughts and experiences. Week by week, we briefly look at the development of the baby and what normally happens with the mother's body at the same time. The book also gives practical advice that can help both the mother and the baby feel better. Of course, our advice is only part of the picture. This diary can't replace the important information from the maternity clinic. It has a different purpose. As you look inside yourself, there are also questions and things for you to think about. These help you reflect on the baby and parenting.

The book is for you, so you can use it however works best for you: maybe as your own private diary or perhaps shared with your partner, a grandparent, others close to you, and later the growing child. You can reflect on the questions and ideas on your own or with someone else. You can also think back on what happened before you got the diary. Recall earlier moments in the pregnancy. What was it like during the earlier weeks? You might find it interesting to read your notes later on. But remember that taking notes isn't the most important thing. What matters is to pause and reflect on the ideas and questions.

Some of the pages have a special space for you to write a greeting to the baby. These can be fun to read later, or you may want to separate them from the book – they can be a very valuable gift for your child. Here and there, we provide some space also for photographs (for example, of the growing belly, the ultrasound-scan images, and the newborn baby). Every pregnancy is unique. Sometimes the pregnancy is shorter than expected. And every parent is unique. So you can use the book in the way that matches your personal situation and fill it in on the basis of what you feel is most suitable.

We hope you will find this pregnancy diary both fun and helpful. We wish you all the best throughout your pregnancy, and we hope you will have many interesting moments with the diary!

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Important dates

The day I found out that I'm pregnant:

The predicted date of delivery, or due date:

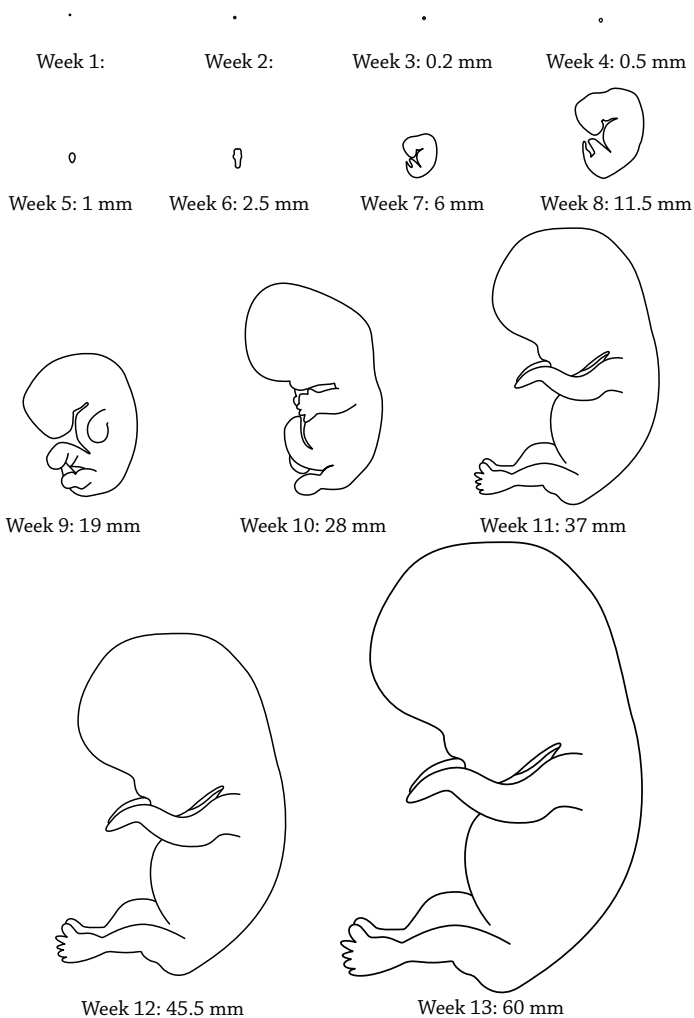
When I heard the sounds of my baby's heart for the first time:

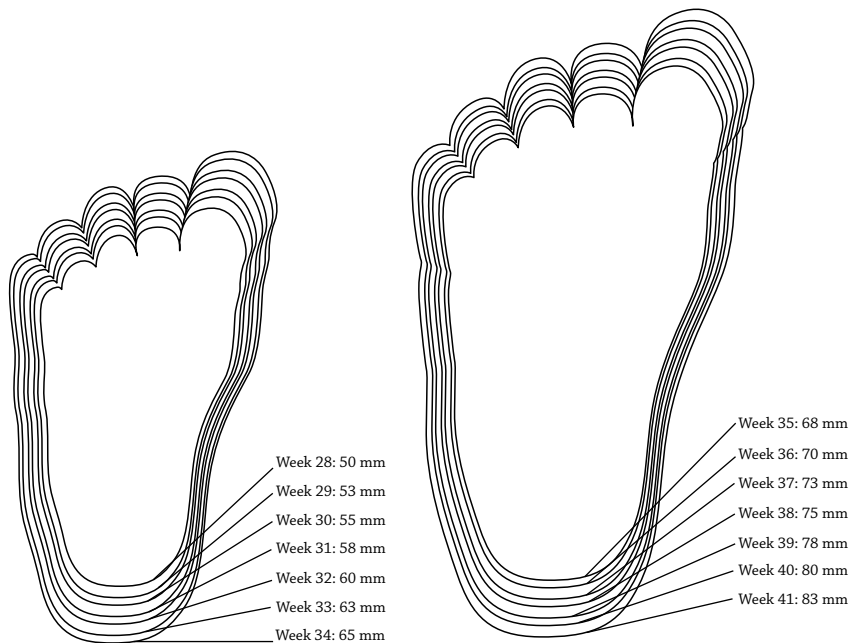
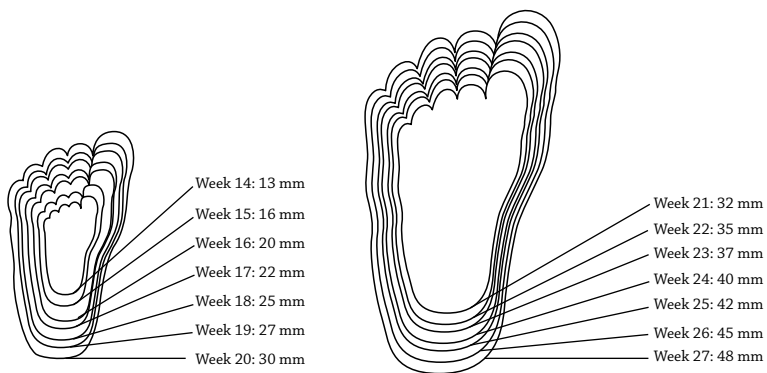
The first time I felt the baby moving:

When the baby's father or someone else close to the baby felt these movements:

Your baby's development

This page helps you keep track of how the fetus is growing in the first 13 weeks of the pregnancy. These sizes are measurements of fetal length from the top of the head to the bottom. The week numbers (here and in other parts of the diary) refer to the amount of time since the last menstrual period began or gestational weeks. From week 14 until the baby is born, the length of the footprint visualizes the size of the fetus. Please remember that all of these figures are estimates. Growth patterns vary from person to person.





Source of information: *Vauvan odotus ("Baby's Expectation")*,
 edited by Kitt E. Sandvik. Published in Helsinki by Vaukirja, 2014.

Week 3 (= 2 completed weeks)

*The first week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 0.2 mm*

The baby:

Fertilization takes place at the beginning of the week: a sperm fertilizes the egg cell. The baby's gender is determined by the information within the sperm cell. Cells start dividing, and soon a firm ball of cells has formed. This is only a tenth of a millimeter in size. At the end of the week, this tiny embryo attaches to the wall of the uterus, or womb.

The mother:

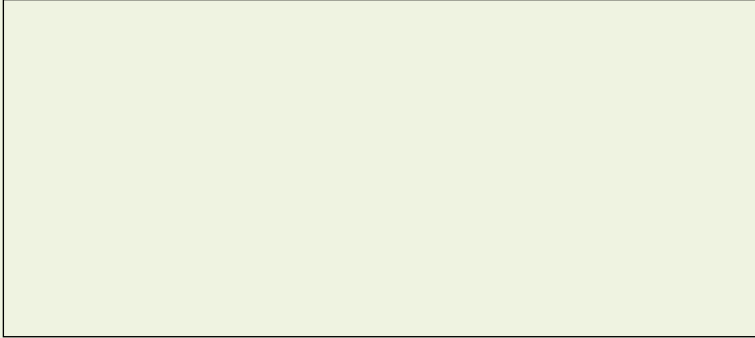
You are not aware that you are pregnant yet. Most people don't know they are pregnant at this point, because there are no signs of pregnancy. Some mothers may experience a small amount of bleeding when the embryo attaches itself to the uterine wall. The mother's body accepts this newcomer because the fertilized egg cell gives it a signal to report that the embryo is a friend, not an enemy.

Tips to remember:

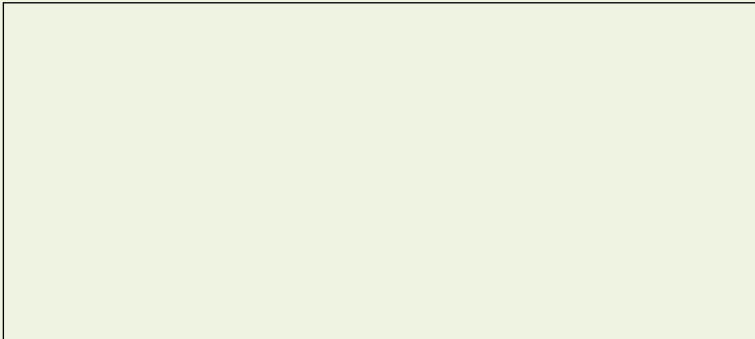
If you have been pregnant before, you may notice the pregnancy very early on. However, each pregnancy and each child is different. All are unique from the very start.



Take a moment to reflect: what kinds of thoughts, questions, or situations have brought you joy recently?



In what ways do you think your joy might be visible?



Nothing is worth more than this day.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



Week 4

*The second week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 0.5 mm*

The baby:

The tiny embryo that attached itself to the wall of the uterus is growing and developing rapidly. The placenta begins to form. A small stalk starts to develop between the embryo and the placenta. This is the umbilical cord. The placenta passes nutrients and oxygen from the mother's body to the fetus, through the umbilical cord.

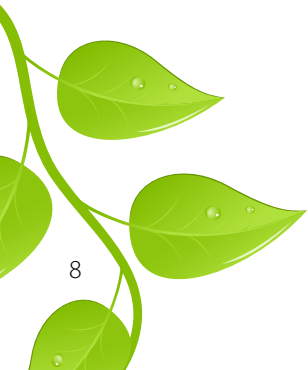
The mother:

Hormones produced by the placenta make their way into the mother's blood. When these have entered circulation, you can test positive for pregnancy. For some mothers, this may occur as early as the tenth day of the pregnancy. Most mothers suffer from nausea in early pregnancy. The changes the body is going through may cause fatigue.

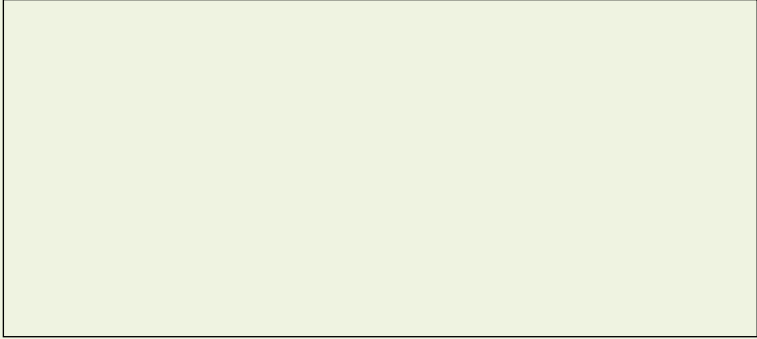
Tips to remember:

Try to get some rest whenever you feel it is needed. Also, eat often enough, enjoying healthy food. This can relieve the nausea and is good for the baby too.

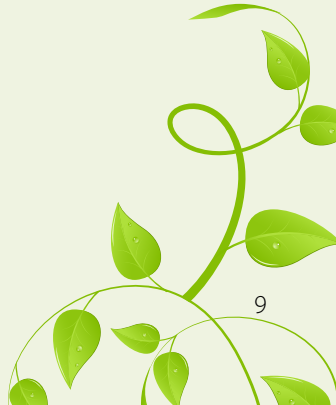
Everyone is a unique person right from the beginning!



Consider how you are doing and how you are feeling right now.



When you think back on the last week, is there any experience, situation, or event that you remember especially well? What was it?



Week 5

0

*The third week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 1 mm*

The baby:

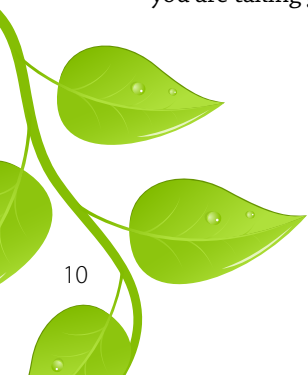
The first part of the developing embryo that forms is the “neural tube”. The other organs begin to form around this. Also, blood circulation is beginning to develop. From now on, the embryo grows at an amazing rate. Genetic codes direct cells to the correct places for specific tasks. Most of human development after this, however, is a result of both genes and environmental factors. At this point in the pregnancy, an ultrasound scan shows a small fetal sac inside the uterus.

The mother:

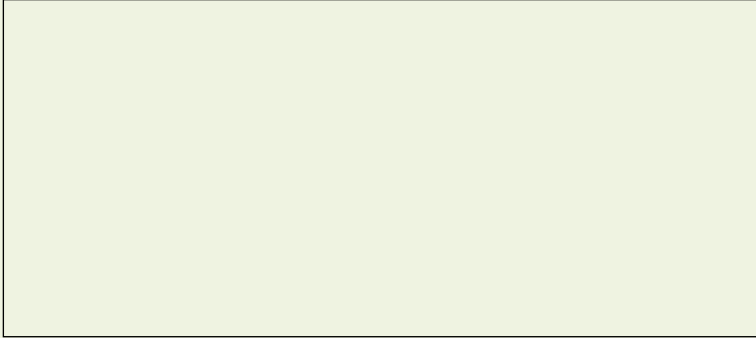
If you think that you might be pregnant, your suspicions are confirmed when your menstrual period doesn't arrive. Also, a pregnancy test will show a positive result. Your mood may vary, and you might notice that you are more sensitive than usual. Sometimes it doesn't take much for you to start crying or to become irritated.

Tips to remember:

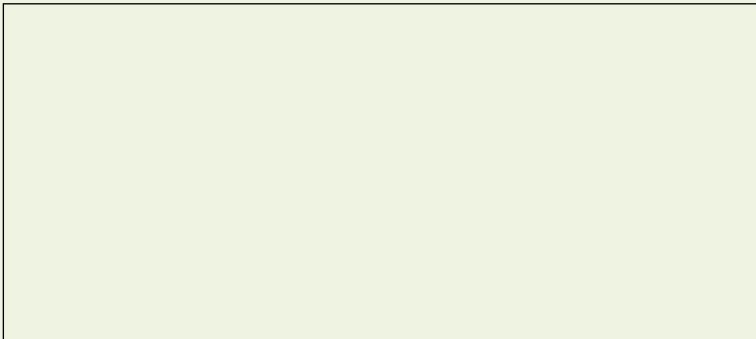
Think about your developing child when you are in the grocery store: remember to buy fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain products. A varied diet is important for the development of the fetus. By eating healthily, you are taking good care of both the baby and yourself!



Do you remember how you felt when you took the pregnancy test and the result was positive?

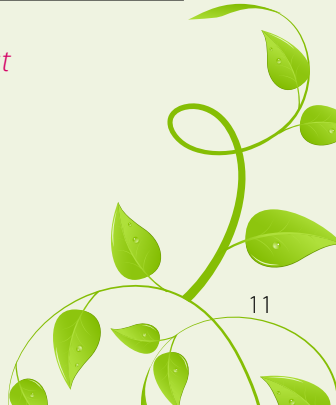


When you think back on the last week, is there any experience, situation, or event that you remember especially well? What was it?



Sometimes, the smallest things take up the most room in your heart.

Winnie the Pooh



Week 6

0

*The fourth week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 2.5 mm*

The baby:

All the major organ systems start developing in weeks 5 to 10.

The neural tube closes and the heart is formed. The embryo, which has a “C” shape, can already be seen in an ultrasound scan.

The mother:

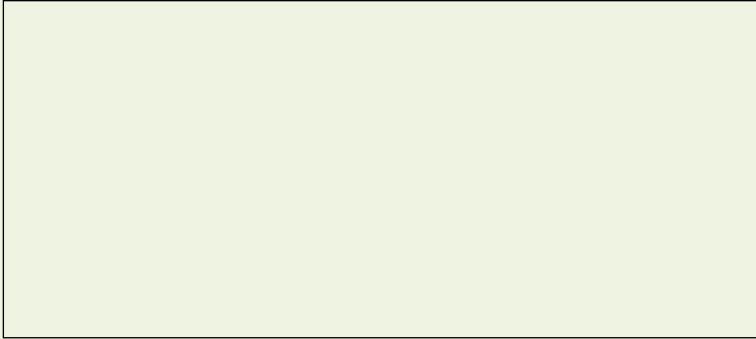
You may already feel a small amount of tingling and tenderness in your breasts. The uterus is a marvelous organ: in early pregnancy, it is similar to a small pear, weighing just 70 grams and able to contain 10 ml. Near the end of the pregnancy, however, it will weigh about one kilogram and may have a volume of a full 10 liters!

Tips to remember:

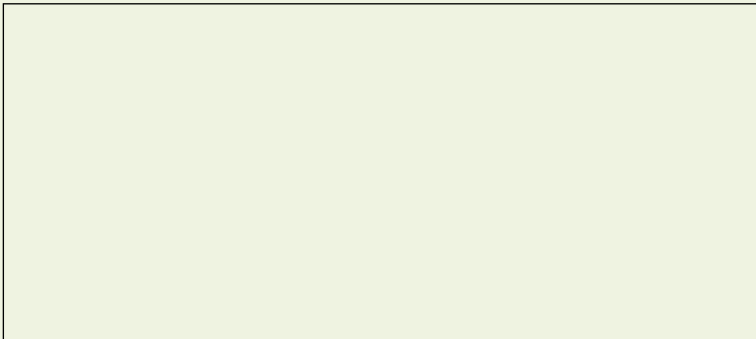
Performing everyday tasks and getting good exercise may help you to feel better and is good for the baby also. The back and abdominal muscles experience especially high strain during pregnancy, so it is advisable to strengthen them. You can choose any type of exercise that feels good for your body, and you can safely continue it throughout the pregnancy. Swimming and other forms of exercise in the water are excellent types of exercise for pregnant women.



We are all different in how our feelings become visible outside our heads. Consider for a moment what kinds of things or situations currently seem to bring joy to your partner or another loved one.

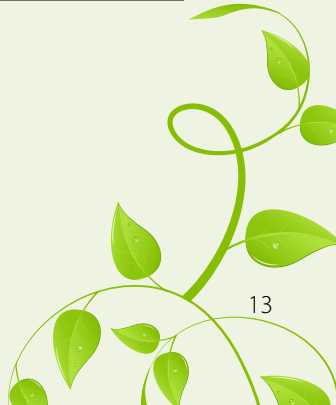


In what way does his or her happiness, in turn, seem visible?



It takes a village to raise a child.

Hillary Clinton



Week 7



*The fifth week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 6 mm*

The baby:

The lungs, intestines, and digestive organs are beginning to form. At the same time, the brain and head are developing quickly. Although the entire body is growing quickly, the head is growing even more rapidly than the other parts of the body. Even the eyes and ears are starting to form. The heartbeats of the little baby are already visible in an ultrasound scan.

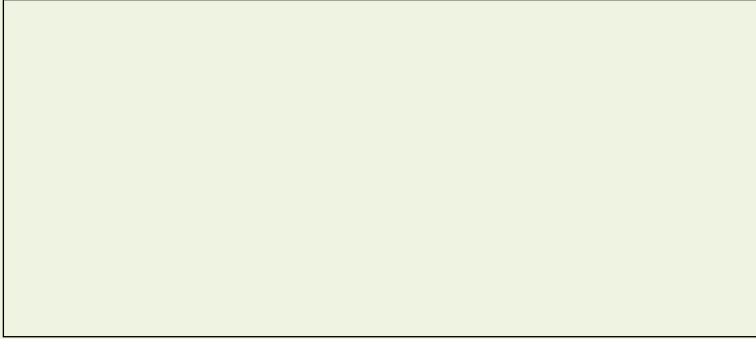
The mother:

The uterus is growing and is already the size of a small apple. The expansion of your uterus may cause a greater urge to use the toilet. The hormone progesterone, secreted by the body, can make you feel tired.

Tips to remember:

Both you and the baby need plenty of fluids, so remember to drink enough. You can get folic acid, which is very important for the baby's development, from green vegetables, beans, fruits, and whole grains. Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs throughout pregnancy. Even other family members using these will affect the baby. You can ensure healthy development of the child by stopping the use of these substances as early in the pregnancy as possible. Also, if you take any medicines regularly, you should discuss them with your doctor at the maternity clinic or with another physician who cares for you.

When you think about the fact that you are expecting a baby, what feelings does this bring to the surface at the moment?

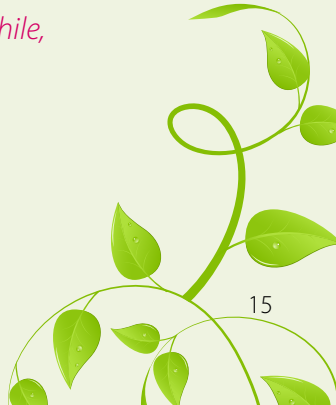


Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



*Parents hold their children's hands for a short while,
but their hearts forever.*

Unknown



Week 8



*The sixth week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 11.5 mm*

The baby:

Facial features begin to develop. For example, the tip of a small nose can be seen. The jaw develops, and tiny buds that will become the first set of teeth form at the top and the bottom part of the jaw. The hands and feet have developed into the shape of small paws. At the end of the week, fingers start to form. The body begins to straighten, and the growing baby resembles a small bean.

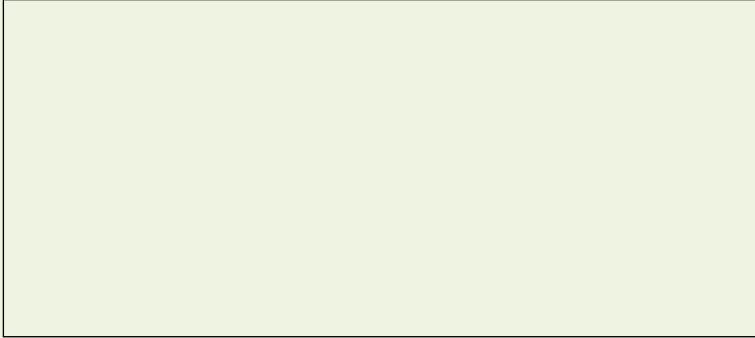
The mother:

You may develop an aversion to familiar foods and drinks. This is the stage of the pregnancy when the nausea is usually worst. However, it tends to fade by the 14th week of pregnancy. The uterus is now about the size of an orange.

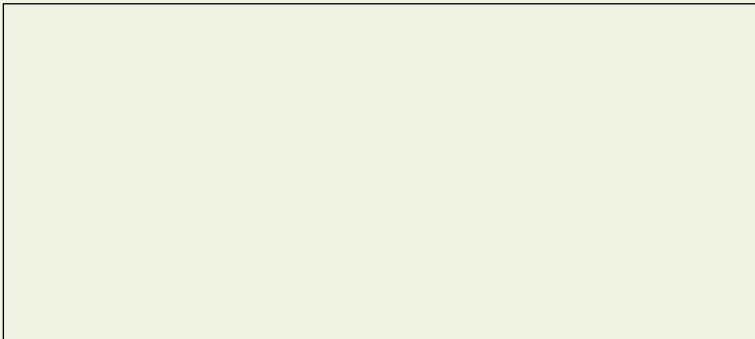
Tips to remember:

To relieve the nausea, you might try eating your evening meal at the very end of the day, right before bedtime. It might help also to have a small snack as soon as you wake up in the morning. In addition, it's helpful to rest. Although nausea during pregnancy may feel very uncomfortable, it doesn't harm the baby, and you don't need to worry about it causing any problems in getting attached to the baby.

Who was the first person you told that you are expecting a baby? How did it feel to share the news with this person?



What emotions do you think the idea of pregnancy and of the baby awakens in him or her?



Each child is an adventure into a better life – an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new.

Hubert H. Humphrey



Week 9



*The seventh week of the
embryo's life
Fetal size: 19 mm*

The baby:

The limbs continue to develop. Even the buds of toes are starting to show now. The muscles are getting stronger. The ability to sense position and the sense of balance begin to develop. Already, the embryo instinctively turns away if, for example, the wall of the uterus comes in contact with the head. The eyes have already developed at this point, although the fetus cannot actually see yet.

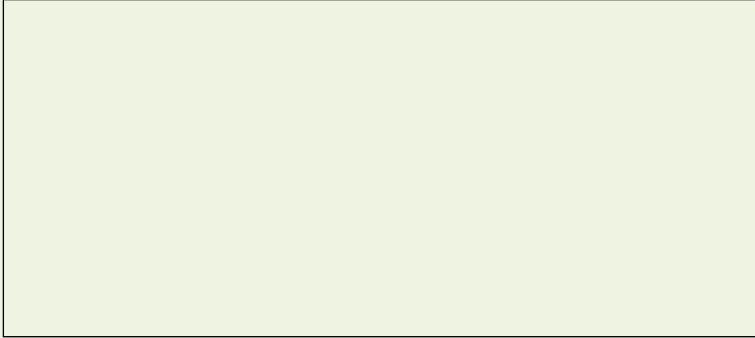
The mother:

You may feel exhausted, and you may be experiencing mood swings. The body is preparing to bring a new life into the world, and this takes a lot of energy. You can trust your body to handle this task, but pay careful attention to it.

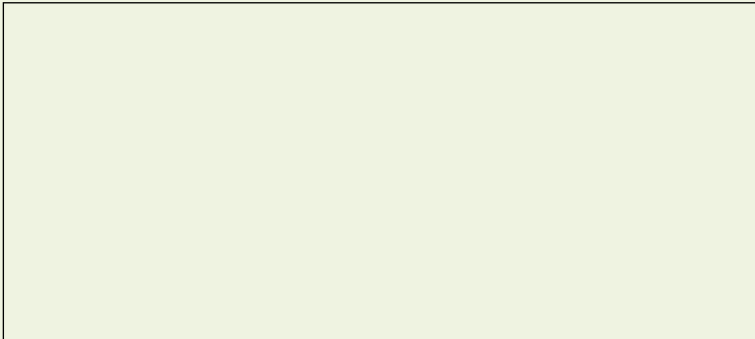
Tips to remember:

During pregnancy, the chest muscles and the hip flexor, which helps the hip to bend, often become tight. This can make it harder to maintain good posture and puts an added burden on your back. So try to move and stretch regularly. It is also important to strengthen the muscles of your bottom (the gluteal muscles), especially if you spend a lot of your time sitting. This is one way to stretch the hip flexors: take a big step forward with one leg, and push your pelvis forward until you can feel a stretch down the front of the other leg's thigh. Then do the same thing with the other leg.

In what way would you like to be pampered right now?

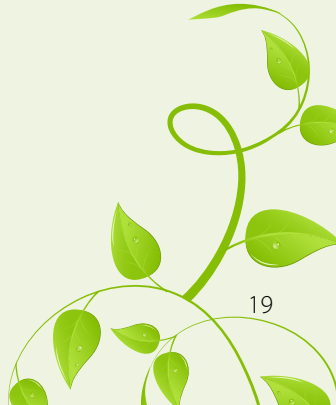


How do you think your partner or another person close to you would like to be pampered right now?



Home is not where you live but where they understand you.

Christian Morgenstern



Week 10



*The eighth week of the embryo's life
Fetal size: 28 mm*

The baby:

By the end of the week, the embryo is starting to look like a small baby. The head is still large in comparison to the body, but all the body parts and organs have begun to develop. At the end of the week, each finger and toe has become separate, and the ears have their final shape. The growing baby has started moving both arms and legs, but you will not be able to feel the movements yet.

The mother:

The uterus is growing and is at least the size of a tennis ball. You may notice your clothes starting to feel tighter. New thoughts and intense emotions may grab your attention. These can feel alarming or intimidating at times. The thoughts and feelings may even be contradictory and not make perfect sense. As an expectant parent, you may also find yourself evaluating your values and priorities from a new perspective. All of this is normal during pregnancy. The purpose is to make you sensitive to the baby's signals but, at the same time, learn to pay attention to your own thoughts and feelings.

Tips to remember:

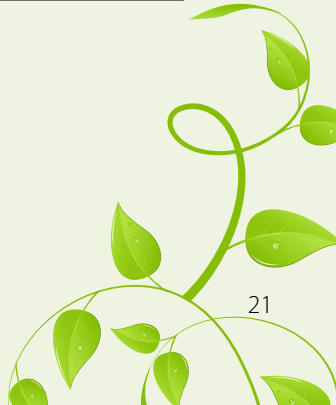
It can help to talk about your thoughts and feelings with a loved one or someone familiar with the process of pregnancy, such as a nurse at the maternity clinic. It's important to look after your mental health. Good company will help you feel good, and you have the right to ask for and expect others to take care of you.

Shared joy is double the joy, and worries feel smaller when one speaks about them.

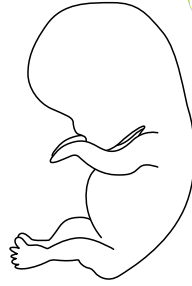
Have you experienced difficult thoughts or emotions lately?
What about anxiety? Of what kind?



Take a moment to think about how your partner or another
person close to you is feeling right now. How do you think he
or she feels?



Week 11



*The ninth week of the fetus's life
Fetal size: 37 mm*

The baby:

At this point in development, the body experiences rapid growth while the head growth has slowed down. This week, the weight of the fetus will double. The joints are already fully developed, and the external genital organs are starting to become identifiable. The fetus shows personal traits, which may resemble those of the parents, and familiar facial expressions might be visible too. The eyes are developing further, with the iris forming. The vocal cords start to develop now, but the fetus can't make sounds while floating in the amniotic fluid.

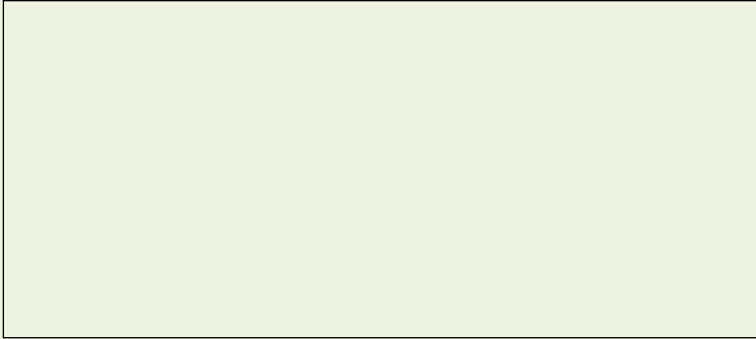
The mother:

The uterus is now about the size of a grapefruit. The mother's blood volume has increased, and her veins may be more visible than before, especially the veins of the legs. The area surrounding the nipple becomes darker, which in time will help the newborn find the nipple. This is one more example of the wonders of the human body!

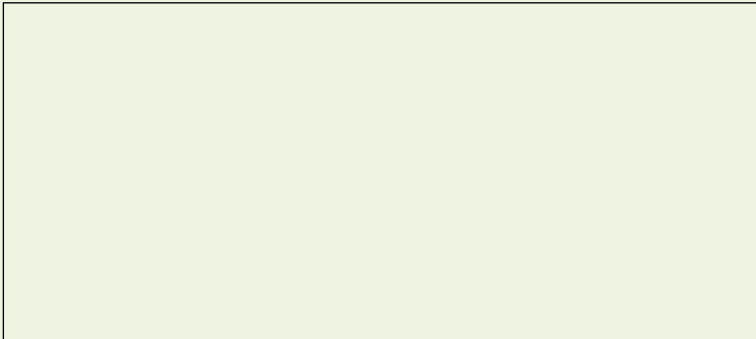
Tips to remember:

You can prevent varicose veins from developing, by elevating your legs now and then, by getting enough exercise, and by using compression stockings. If you are craving something sweet, dried fruit is a good option.

Take a moment to think about your child's traits. What external characteristics do you especially hope that he or she might inherit from you?



Take a moment to think about your child. What externally visible traits do you especially wish he or she might inherit from the other parent?



Only love can be divided endlessly and still not diminish.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh



Week 12



*The tenth week of the fetus's life
Fetal size: 45.5 mm*

The baby:

All of the organs have now been formed. Now, their functions begin to develop. The fetus is very sensitive to touch, and even light contact from the environment gets the limbs moving. Teeth begin to form from the tooth buds in the gums. The palate too develops, to allow the baby to eat and breathe at the same time. Nails are now gradually forming at the tiny fingertips.

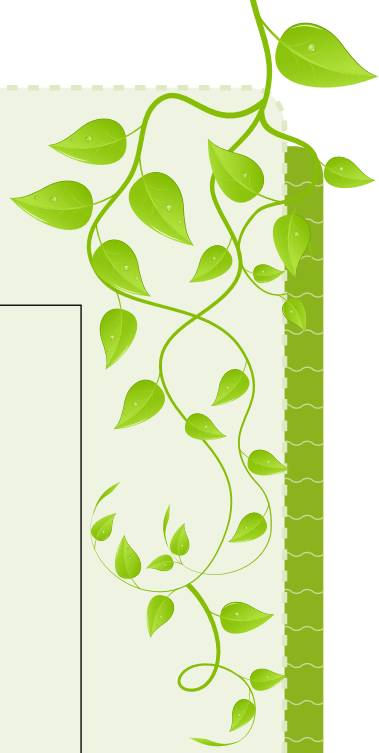
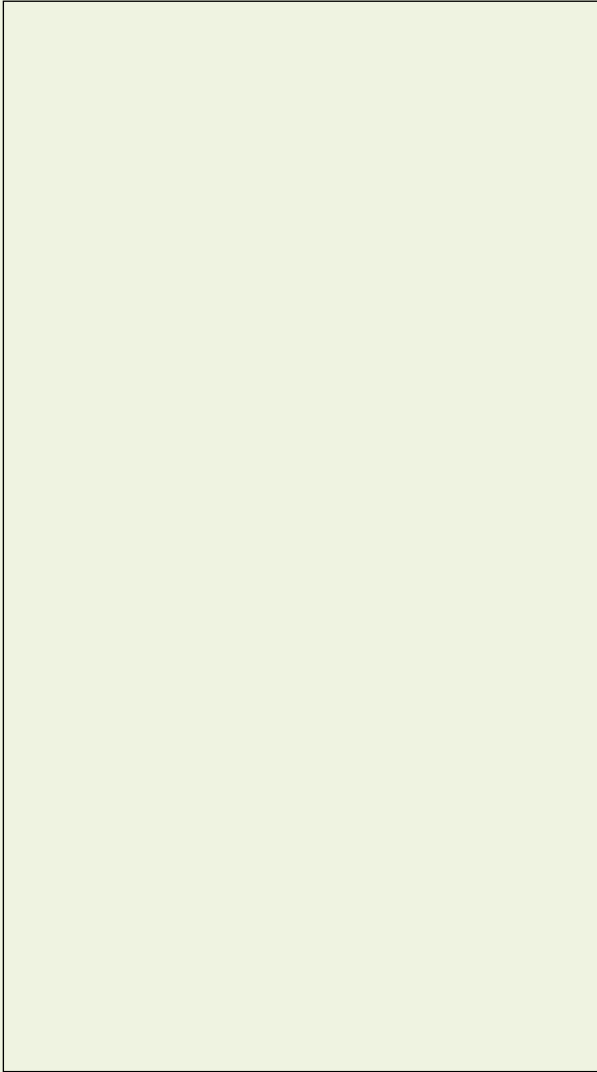
The mother:

Occasional headaches and dizziness may occur, because of hormonal changes or stress. The mood swings usually begin to level off, but every pregnancy is unique in this regard too. At the same time, changes in the hormonal balance and saliva composition increase the risk of gum infections and tooth decay.

Tips to remember:

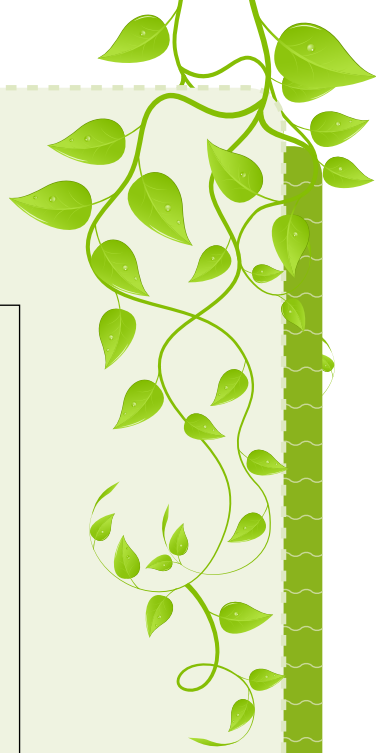
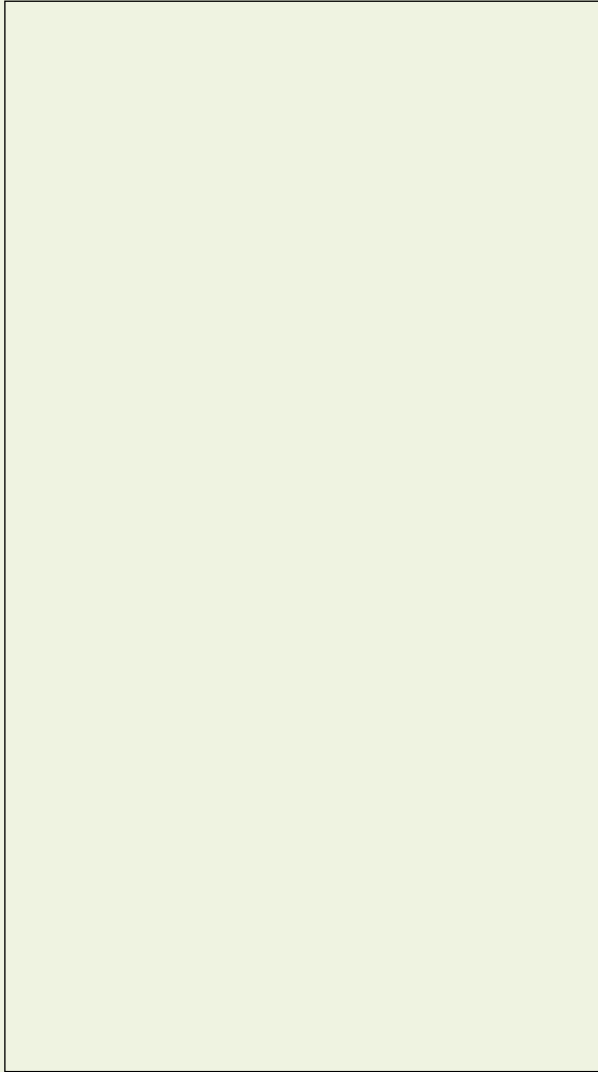
If you feel dizzy or weak, raising the legs may help. It's important also to remember to rise slowly when you want to stand after lying down. In addition, eating snacks should decrease the lightheadedness. A healthy diet will help to keep your teeth clean and healthy, especially in combination with regular brushing and use of dental floss. In Finland, families expecting their first child have the right to a dental check-up. By taking care of their own health, the parents help to look after the baby's health.

Greetings to you, my dear baby,
on the date _____ / _____ 20 _____



This is a picture for you, my baby.

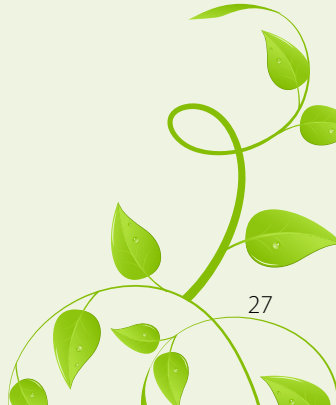
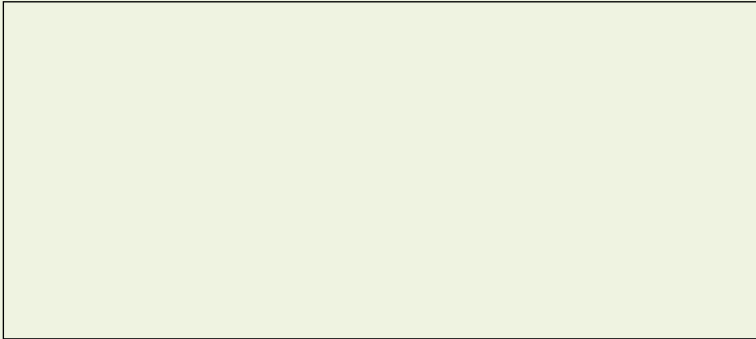
Date: _____ / _____ 20_____



Have you noticed particular situations during which you think about your baby?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 13



*The eleventh week of the
fetus's life
Fetal size: 60 mm*

The baby:

The fetus is very busy in the uterus. The tiny baby is testing out the lungs and other organs – yawning, swallowing, and even making some of the motions of breathing. Sometimes the fetus may even suck on his or her thumb. There is also a reflex of opening the mouth when something touches the face – this reflex will help the newborn baby connect with food sources. All of the “baby teeth” have started to grow, and the genitals are now clearly identifiable.

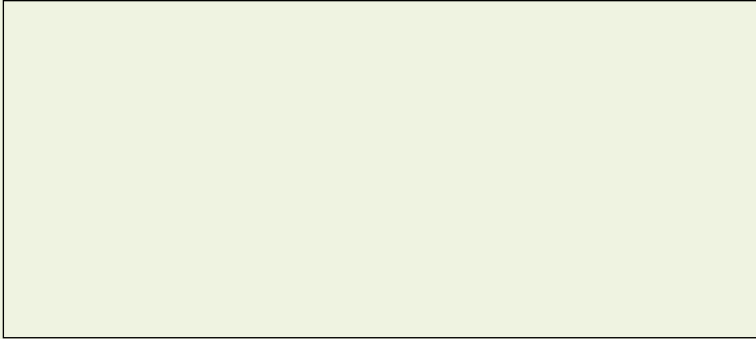
The mother:

The chances of this pregnancy ending in miscarriage are now small. You might notice that the lower part of your belly has started getting rounder. As the uterus grows, you may feel a pinching in the lower abdomen and need to urinate more often. Loose clothing may improve your blood circulation and make you feel better in other ways too. Predisposition to bladder and yeast infections rises as pregnancy progresses. Often, fatigue diminishes in this stage.

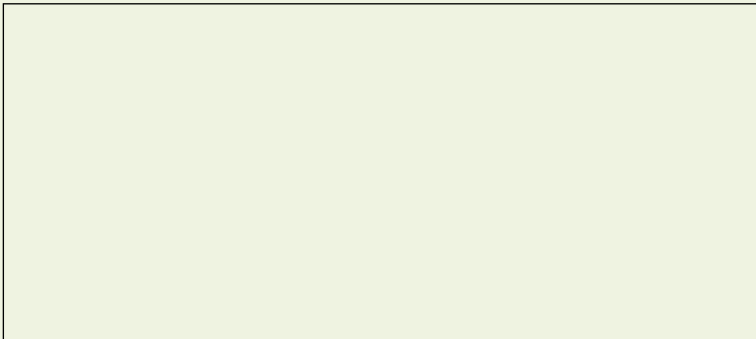
Tips to remember:

For strong bones, your baby needs calcium; milk and other dairy products are good sources of this. Avoiding intoxicants (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) helps in your baby’s healthy development. Even if you didn’t stop using drugs earlier in the pregnancy, it will still help the child if you stop now. Also, make sure you have discussed any regular medication you use with a doctor.

Does the baby's sex matter to you? Do you care whether the baby is a girl or a boy? Are you thinking of the baby as either a girl or a boy?

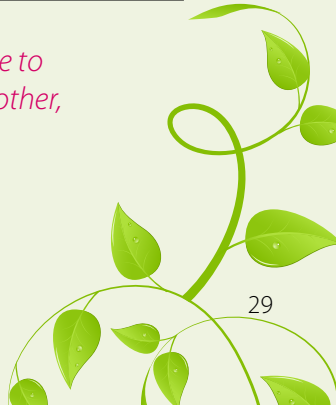


Take a moment to think about why this might be the case. Where might these thoughts come from?



There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these [...] is roots, the other, wings.

Hodding Carter



Week 14



*The twelfth week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 13 mm*

The baby:

This is the start of the second trimester of pregnancy, the middle third of the pregnancy. This is the time when the baby grows the most quickly. The fetus is moving actively, and the movements have become more fluid: the toes and hands are being used, and the fetus can move the thumb independently from the other fingers. The length of the arms in comparison to the body is already almost the same as at birth, but the legs are still relatively short. The tongue's taste buds are starting to function, and the fetus can notice differences in flavor in the amniotic fluid.

The mother:

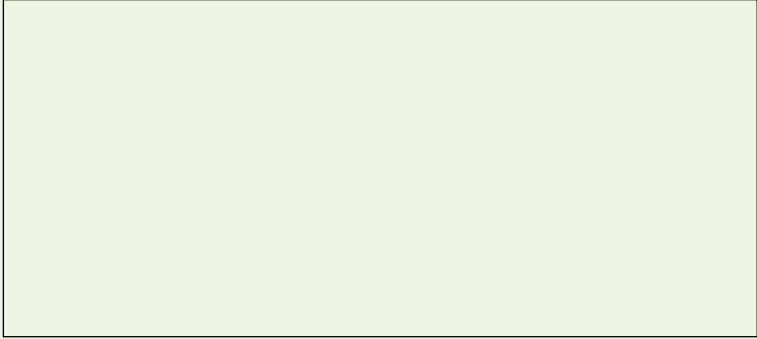
Nausea has usually eased off by this point in the pregnancy. During pregnancy, the mother's blood volume increases, but the number of red blood cells doesn't increase enough to match. In other words, the blood is "diluted." To compensate for the lower hemoglobin levels, the mother's iron intake should increase.

Tips to remember:

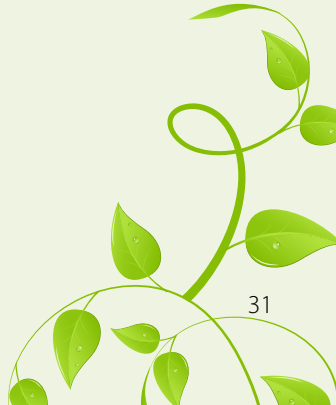
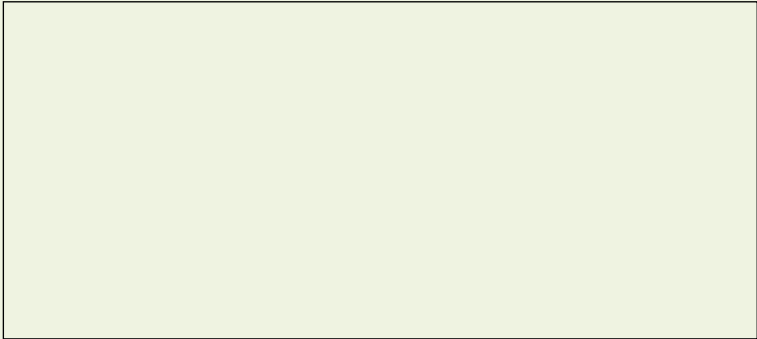
The fetus needs nourishment even if you aren't hungry yourself, so it is good to eat small meals regularly. This way, both you and the baby will feel better. Eating this way also prevents heartburn and keeps your blood-sugar levels stable. Make sure your diet contains enough iron.

Prune juice is one example of excellent sources of iron, and it has an added benefit, helping to prevent constipation.

Do you remember how you felt the first time you heard the baby's heart beating? Can you describe the feeling?



What kinds of feelings and sensations arise in you when you think about the baby?



Week 15



*The 13th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 16 mm*

The baby:

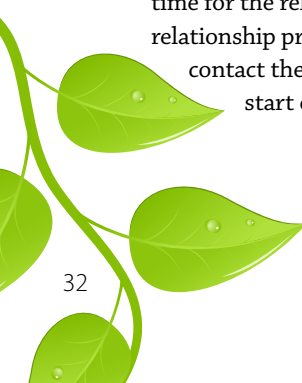
You might not feel it yet, but the fetus is already making larger movements in the womb. These include turning his or her head, making grasping motions with the hands, touching the face, and kicking. Also, the hair-growth pattern is already established. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs about 50 grams.

The mother:

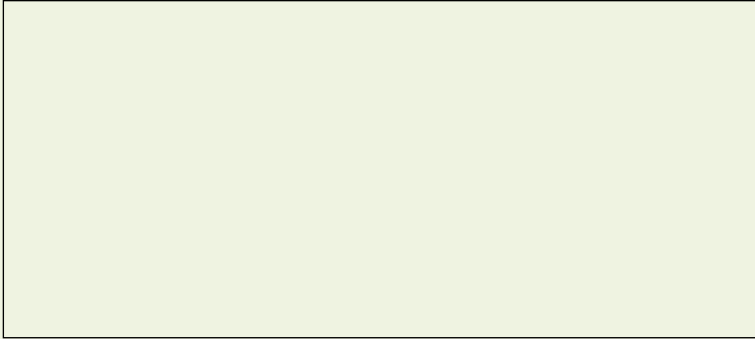
For most mothers, the pregnancy is starting to show: the breasts are getting larger, and the belly is getting rounder. Some changes may puzzle you at first – your familiar body may seem a little alien. For example, when you press lightly on the lower part of your belly, the upper edge of the uterus can be felt halfway between your belly button and the pubic bone. A dark stripe running down the belly may be visible. This line, the *linea negra*, appears because pregnancy related hormone changes affect the skin's pigment cells.

Tips to remember:

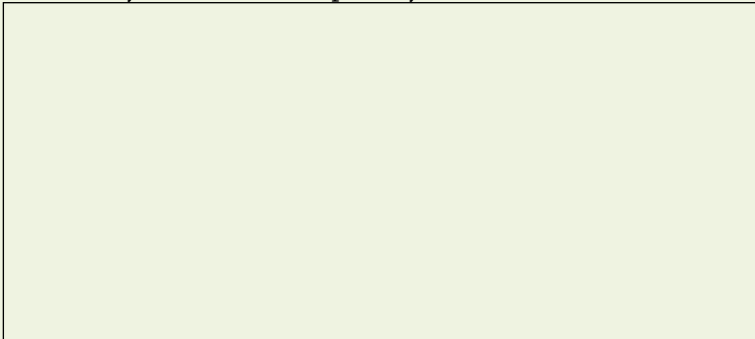
A good relationship between the parents gives a warm sense of security for the child. Because pregnancy is a time of change, it can be a tough time for the relationship between the parents. So if you are experiencing relationship problems or if you feel threatened in any way, you should contact the maternity clinic to get help. The pregnancy is a chance to start over and make positive changes, even in your relationship.



Take a moment to think about your baby. Which of your character traits would you especially wish the baby might inherit from you?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



*You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.*

Kahlil Gibran



Week 16



*The 14th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 20 mm*

The baby:

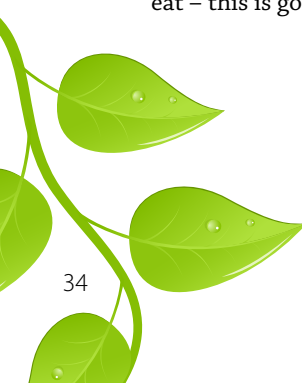
The body is still growing more quickly than the head. Between the two, the neck has straightened – the chin no longer rests against the chest, and the head is more upright than before. The ears have nearly reached their final location. The eyelids remain closed. Nails are beginning to grow on the tiny toes. If your baby curled up, he or she would still fit inside a teacup.

The mother:

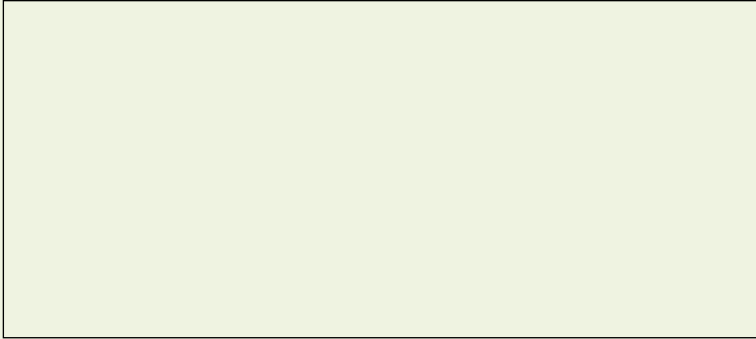
The blood vessels that carry blood through the pelvis area get larger during pregnancy. Blood flow increases. Nearby, the mucous membrane of the vagina takes on a bluish color, and the tissue thickens and starts to swell. Sexual arousal may increase during pregnancy. Enjoy it!

Tips to remember:

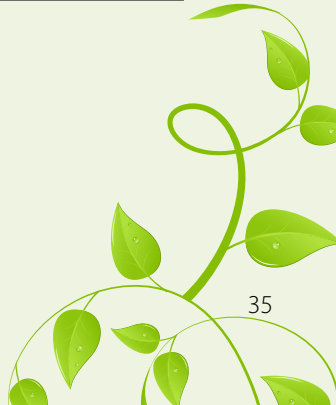
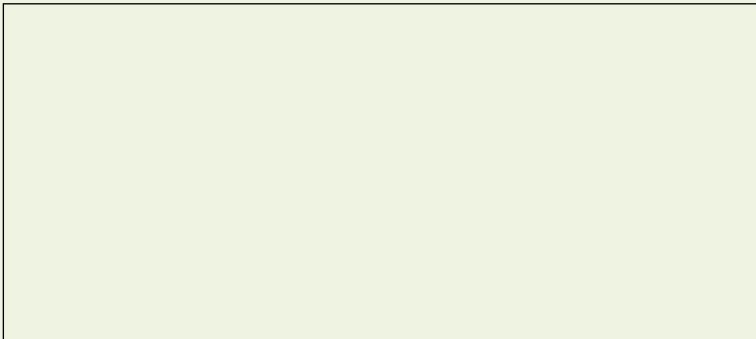
It is getting more important to be able to relax, because the baby is growing rapidly and the mother's body and mind must work harder than usual. So think about what ways to relax and enjoy yourself would work best right now. Then go for it! You have the right to indulge and pamper yourself. However, do pay attention to the quality of what you eat – this is good not only for you but also for the baby.



Take a moment to think about your baby. Which of the other parent's character traits would you wish that the baby might inherit?



Who else might be thinking about your baby already? To whom do you think the baby is precious already at this point?



Week 17



*The 15th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 22 mm*

The baby:

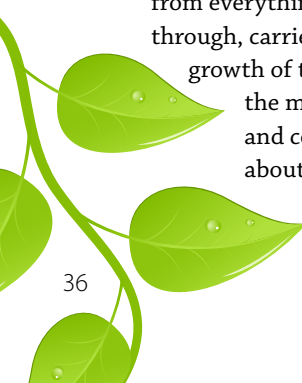
The umbilical cord provides an important link between the fetus and the placenta. Flowing through this real “lifeline,” the blood carries nutrients from the mother to the fetus, and it transports waste products away from the fetus so that the mother can eliminate them from her body naturally. The fetus is already able to blink, move the eyebrows and scowl, and clench his or her hands into fists. In addition, the fetus is getting more familiar with breathing movements. Other instinctive movements are increasing also. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs about 140 grams.

The mother:

The placenta is an amazing organ, handling so many functions. The placenta makes sure the fetus gets oxygen throughout the pregnancy, produces hormones that help the mother's body adjust to pregnancy, and protects the fetus. For example, most bacteria cannot cross the barrier created by the placenta.

Tips to remember:

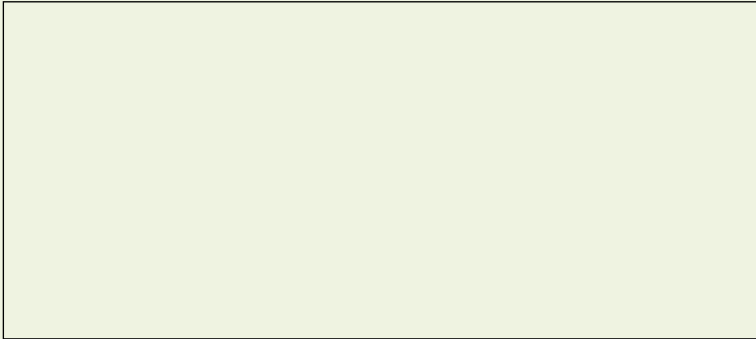
Although highly sophisticated, the placenta cannot protect the fetus from everything: most drugs, alcohol, and other intoxicants pass through, carried by the mother's blood. Alcohol and tobacco impair growth of the brain and slow down fetal development. The staff at the maternity clinic will monitor the well-being of the baby and consider the family too. The clinic can also give you advice about the social benefits associated with pregnancy.



Which good experience from your own childhood would you like to pass on or share with your family?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



You didn't have a choice about the parents you inherited but you do have a choice about the kind of parent you will be.

Marian Wright Edelman



Week 18



*The 16th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 25 mm*

The baby:

The digestive system is already functioning: the fetus is swallowing amniotic fluid, which collects in the intestines, then passes from the tiny body as meconium, your baby's first poop. The tips of the fingers and toes have developed. Even a fetus has unique fingerprints! A fatty substance forms on the surface of nerves, which speeds up the transmission of signals between nerve cells. Also, the bones begin to harden. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs approximately 200 grams already.

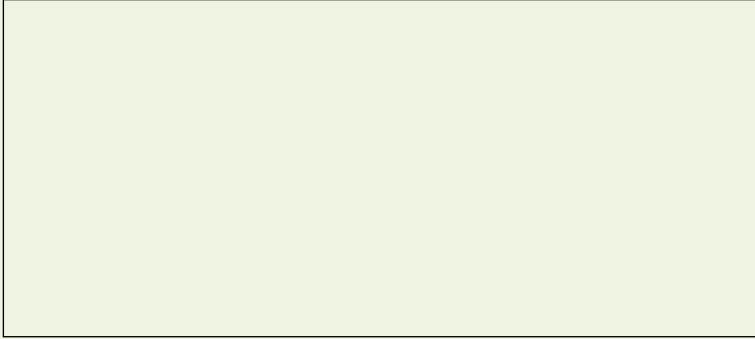
The mother:

Your belly is getting even rounder. You may start feeling the movements of the fetus – the first hints of these are often “butterflies” or rumbling in your stomach area. Your heart muscle is now working almost twice as hard as before the pregnancy. This will continue until the birth.

Tips to remember:

Just as positive thoughts and feelings are an important part of pregnancy, so are occasional episodes of fear and uncertainty. It's natural to feel uncertain: your life is about to change. You may find yourself thinking about your relationship with your own parents and about experiences from early in your childhood. Sometimes these memories can be painful. They can still contribute to a new perspective – your pregnancy can be part of positive changes to cross-generation relationships.

Imagine that you are a small child. What characteristics would you most like to see in your parents?

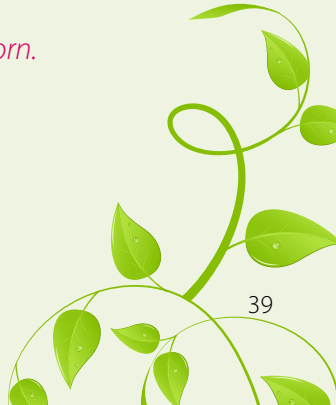


What would you like to give your child that you did not have as a child?



The moment a child is born, the mother is also born.

Osho



Week 19



*The 17th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 27 mm*

The baby:

Downy hair (called lanugo) covers the baby's skin. This light fuzz holds in place the protective wax (called vernix) that forms on the skin of the fetus. By birth, most of this down has disappeared. Sometimes, the fetus hiccups. The mother can feel the hiccups as a small movement that occurs every few seconds. A session of fetal hiccups lasts no longer than half an hour. The fetus now weighs about 250 grams.

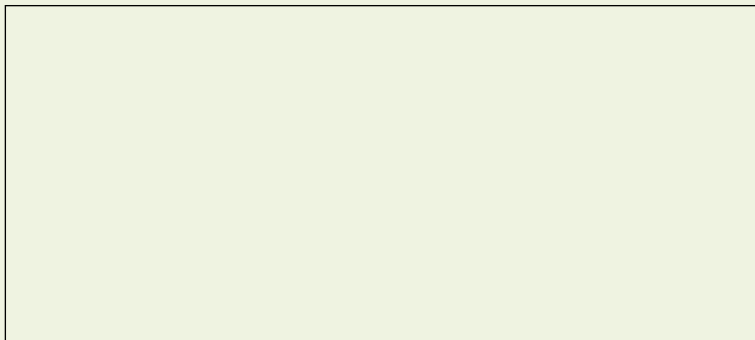
The mother:

For the next 12 weeks, the mother's weight gain ramps up. Hormonal changes may lead to darkly pigmented patches of skin, called liver spots. As the hormones return to normal after delivery, these spots usually fade. By using sunscreen, you can prevent liver spots from appearing at all.

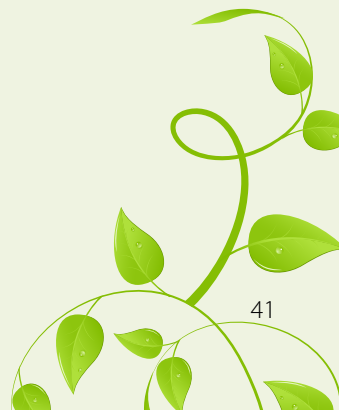
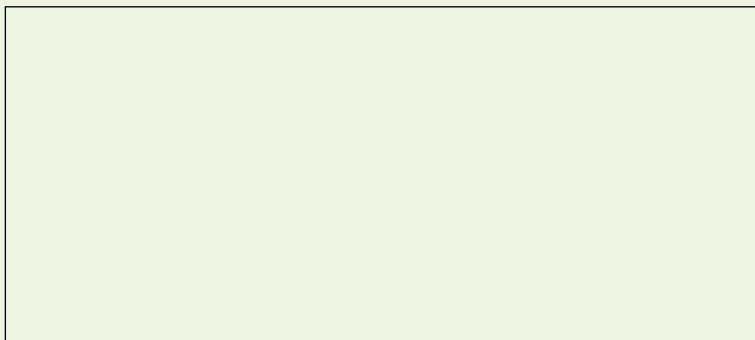
Tips to remember:

Remember to reserve some time for peace and quiet every day. You need these daily moments of relaxation. Listen to yourself, your body, and the baby. If you feel that you are lonely too often, you should seek the company of friends or acquaintances when you find it hard to be alone. You can ask them to visit you. If you do not have relatives or if they are far away, you can seek support through the maternity clinic.

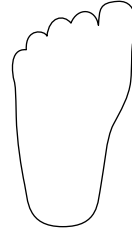
Which of your mother's characteristics would you like to see in yourself as a parent?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 20



*The 18th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 30 mm*

The baby:

The fetus can already hear your heartbeats and the rhythm of your heart. The fetus is now asleep and awake as much as a newborn. When you walk, the motions may rock him or her to sleep. When sleeping, your baby has a favorite position to curl up in. Personal features such as the hair and eyebrows can already be seen. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs about 300 grams.

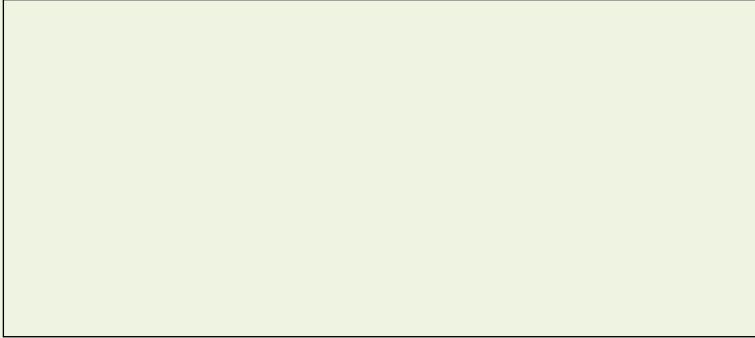
The mother:

Most mothers recognize the baby's movements for the first time in weeks 19 to 21. Those who have given birth before or who are very slim might feel these movements a bit earlier. Experiencing the movements of your baby is an important stage in pregnancy, and many mothers feel that this helps to strengthen their relationship with the child. For example, if you lie on your back and calmly caress your belly, the child may react and move. If you pay careful attention, you may find yourself able to make contact with your child.

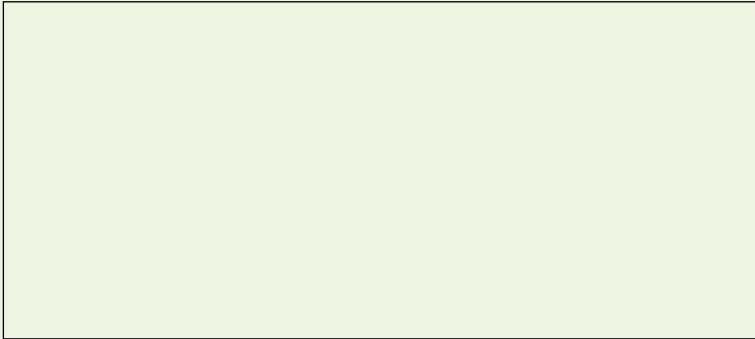
Tips to remember:

This is approximately the time when an ultrasound scan of the fetus is performed. The purpose of the scan is to make sure that the fetus is showing normal growth and that the brain, heart, body, legs, arms, etc. have all developed normally. The ultrasound image lets you see the fetus's heartbeat and its movement in the womb. What is the fetus doing while you are watching?

Which of your father's characteristics would you like to see in yourself as a parent?

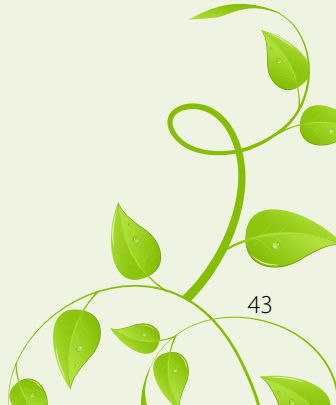


Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?

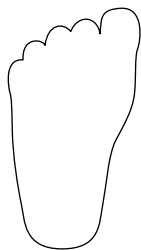


*To be in your children's memories tomorrow,
you have to be in their lives today.*

Unknown



Week 21



*The 19th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 32 mm*

The baby:

The fetus is already moving a lot in the amniotic fluid: twisting around, turning, doing somersaults, and spinning around like a little dancer. The baby is also perfecting his or her talents at sucking. Some studies show that girls and boys behave differently in the womb, even this early: girls move their mouth more than boys. The legs will soon be more proportional to the rest of the body. The face looks peaceful, with eyes closed, and the mouth is well-developed.

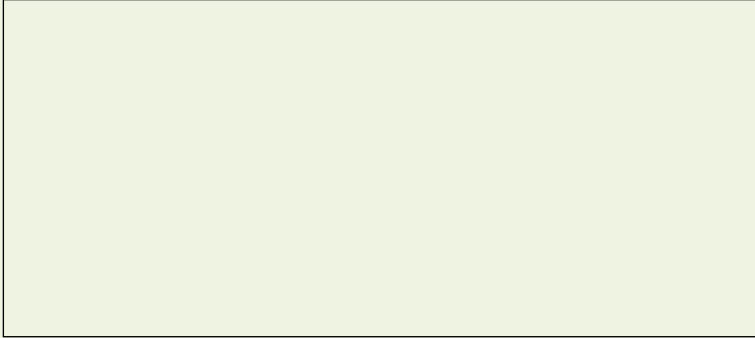
The mother:

The uterus has expanded further, and its upper edge is now at about the level of your navel. Your metabolism and blood circulation are more active, so you may sweat more than before – and the baby keeps you warmer. It's important to drink enough: amniotic fluid gets replaced every few hours. Many mothers find their nails and hair stronger during pregnancy and the growth of these faster than usual. The sounds of the baby's heart can be heard already with a stethoscope on the belly.

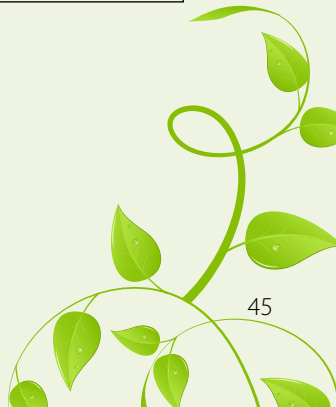
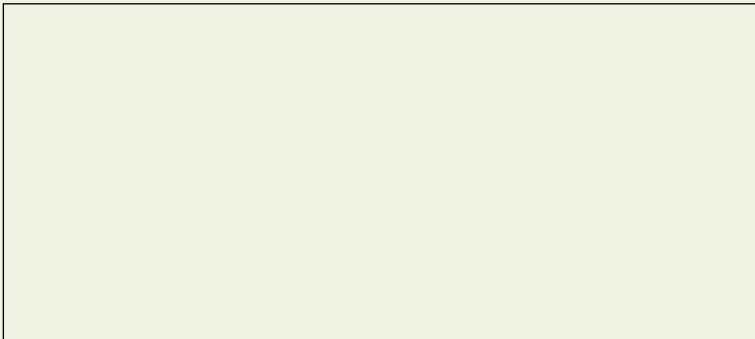
Tips to remember:

You may have noticed that you're on an "emotional roller coaster": You may be short-tempered and more absentminded than usual. Surprising things can leave you emotional. It might help to speak with loved ones about your feelings and even about more trivial matters. Remember to rest and to pay attention to your posture: You may feel most comfortable if you lie on your side and use quite a firm mattress. Also, cushions that support the body can help. Let your body flourish, and remember to enjoy yourself!

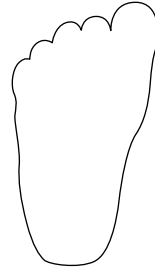
What do you think the baby needs and expects from you right now, at this stage of pregnancy?



To the baby's father or another person who is close the baby:
What do you think the baby's mom is expecting and needing from you at this stage in her pregnancy?



Week 22



*The 20th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 35 mm*

The baby:

The fetus looks like a tiny version of a newborn now – everything has the final shape and proportions, even though the layer of fat beneath the skin is still very thin. The brain is growing rapidly, and its fast growth continues until the fifth year of life. The sense of hearing improves, and the small bones in the middle ear, which transmit the sounds to the brain, start to harden. The fetus reacts to loud noises in the surroundings but can't figure out what the sounds are. The fetus is now about half the length the baby will be on the estimated due date.

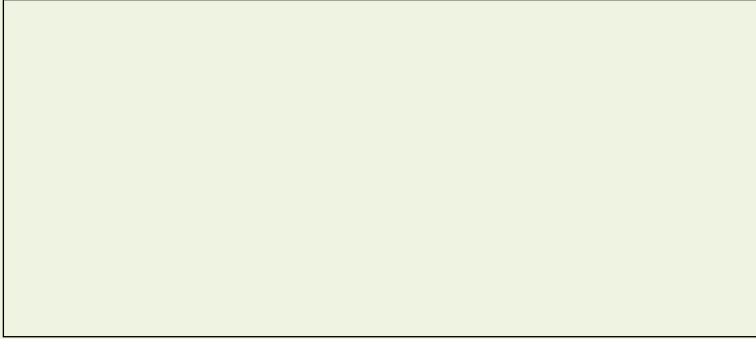
The mother:

Most moms feel good during this part of their pregnancy. Heartburn is still a common cause of discomfort, however, because hormones relax the muscles of the esophagus and the stomach empties more slowly. It is recommended that you eat varied but small meals, regularly. Some mothers may feel the womb tighten now and then. Such painless contractions are a normal part of pregnancy.

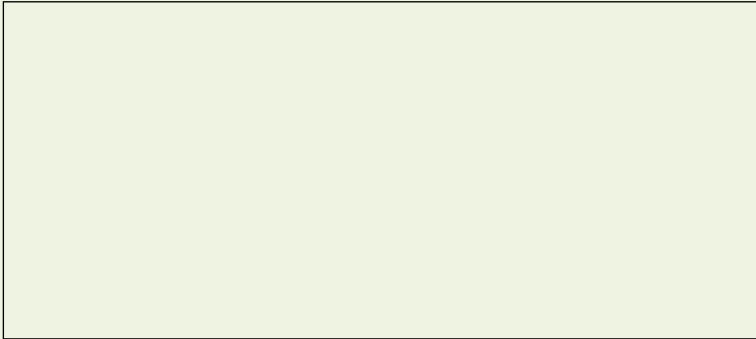
Tips to remember:

The added nutrition that the mother needs during pregnancy is equivalent to just one extra sandwich and glass of milk per day – you don't really need to “eat for two.” However, the need for vitamin D is clearly increased. In fact, it's so large that pregnant and nursing women find it difficult to get enough vitamin D through diet alone. A daily supplement of vitamin D is recommended for these moms.

If you could ask the baby any question right now, what would you like to ask?



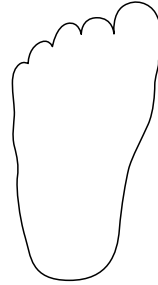
Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



**The mother is the child's channel to the world:
that which affects the mother also affects the child.**



Week 23



*The 21st week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 37 mm*

The baby:

The fetus begins to develop its own sleep-wake patterns, in a daily rhythm: sometimes the fetus is more alert, and at other times the baby is resting. Hand size and muscle strength have increased, so the grip is already quite powerful. The fetus now weighs about half a kilogram.

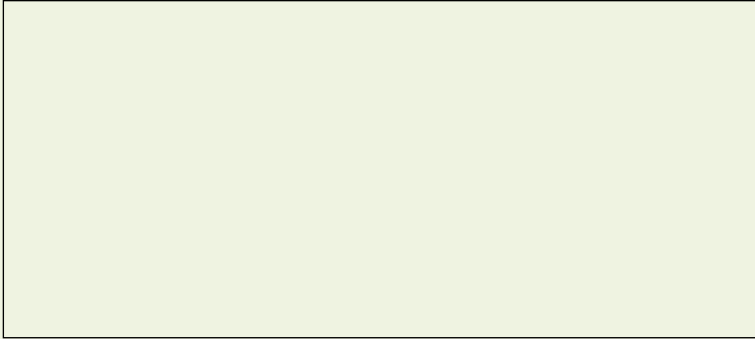
The mother:

Pain in the back and pelvis area are common, because the ligaments there are stretched during pregnancy. This stretching makes childbirth easier. You may feel pain also as the uterus grows and when the ligaments that hold it in place are stretched.

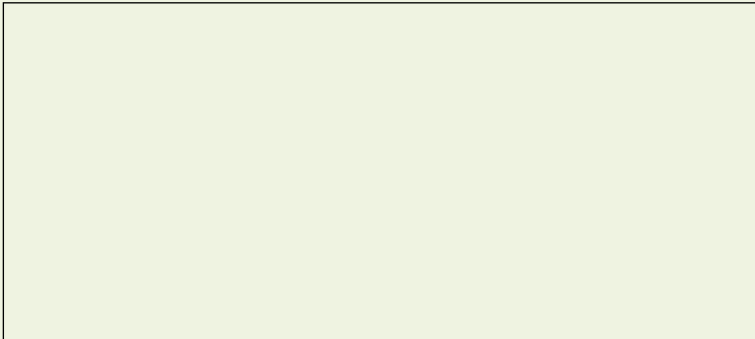
Tips to remember:

You can relieve the back pain by maintaining good fitness and muscle tone. Another practical tip may help if you experience pain in your lower back: you can try wearing sturdy shoes with low heels. Meanwhile, discomfort in the shoulders and upper back can be relieved with the following exercise: place your fingers lightly on your shoulders, and then roll your shoulders slowly. If you have recurring back pain, however, or if there is discharge from the vagina in addition to pain, you should contact the maternity clinic.

At the moment, which of your personal traits do you think will be the most positive ones as a parent and serve you best in your role as a parent?

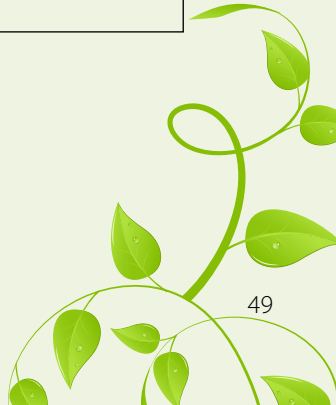


At the moment, which aspects of your spouse/ the other parent do you think will be the most positive ones as a parent and serve him/her best as a parent?

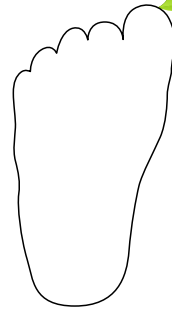


The soul is healed by being with children.

F. Dostoyevski



Week 24



*The 22nd week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 40 mm*

The baby:

The fetus can hear your heartbeat steadily and also hears your voice when you speak. In the same way, the fetus can hear your intestinal sounds and your breathing. This is a very intimate connection you share! The other sounds of your family become familiar to the growing child gradually before birth. The fetus still has thin, translucent, and very sensitive skin. The weight of the fetus is now quickly increasing.

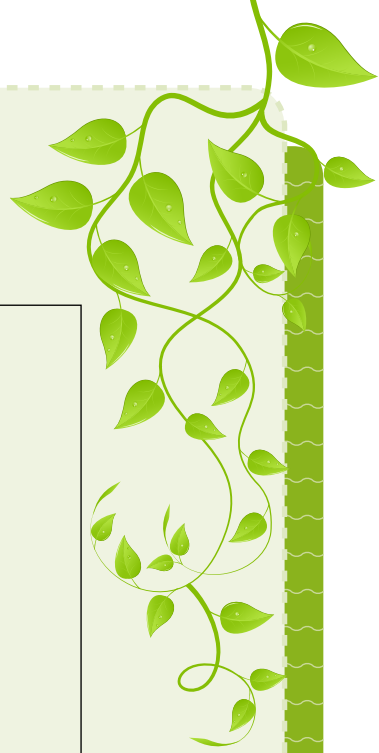
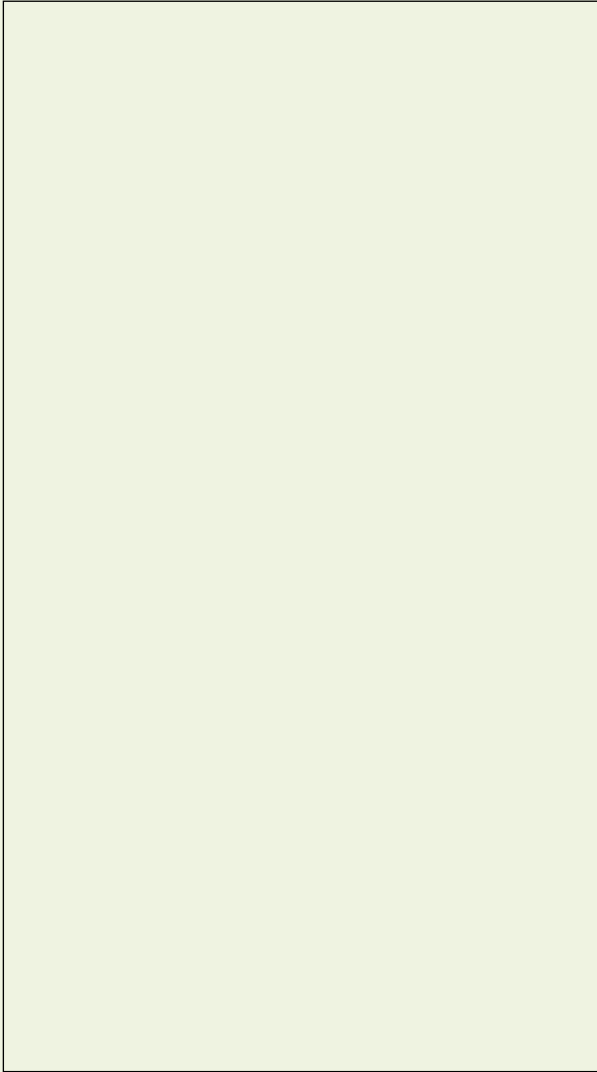
The mother:

Your belly is now growing at roughly the same rate as the baby. When you relax, you may be able to feel the baby get excited and start moving. You might already feel such movements clearly, but it will probably take a few weeks before other people are able to detect the movements through the abdominal wall. The baby's heartbeats may already be detectable by others if they press an ear against your belly or, for example, use an empty toilet-paper tube as a sort of stethoscope.

Tips to remember:

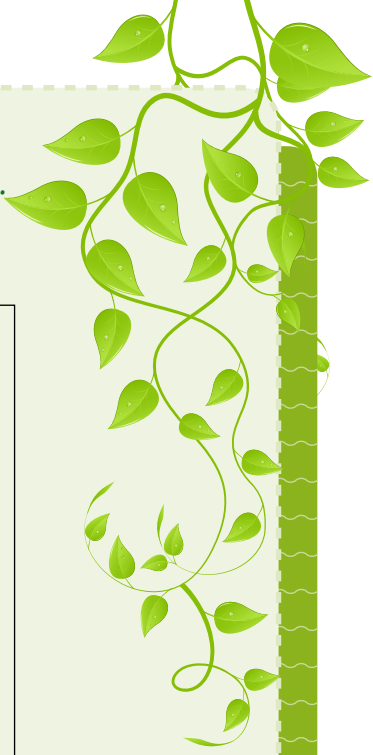
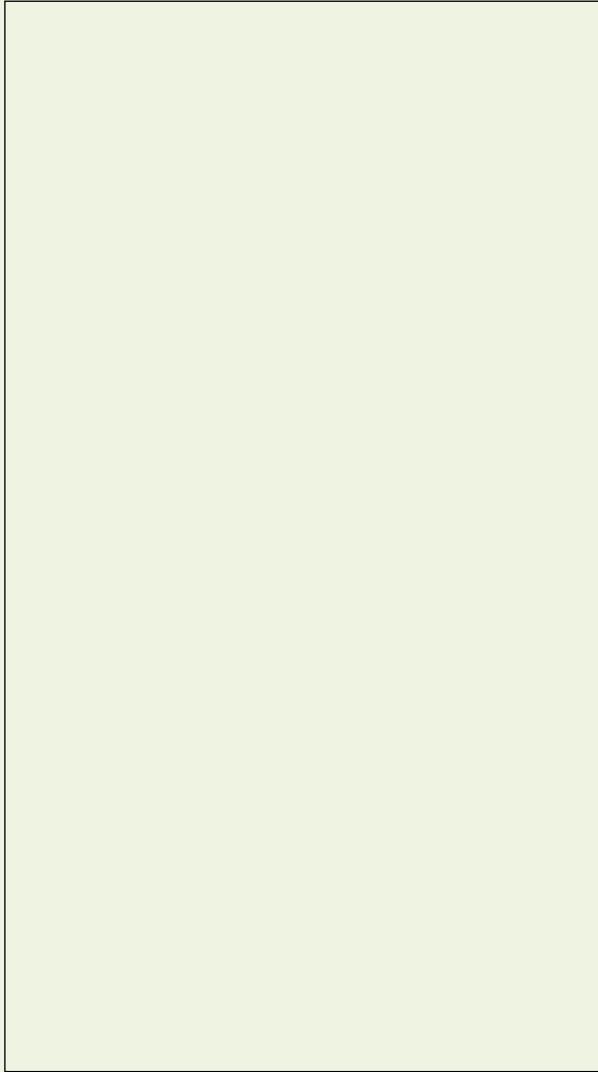
Singing or talking to the baby bump is worthwhile. Sounds that are familiar from the womb will calm the baby down even after birth. You should feel free to exercise as much as you want, as long as it feels good for your body. However, avoid forms of exercise in which you might receive hard blows to the belly. Walking, swimming, and stretching all are suitable exercises for pregnant women.

Greetings to you, my dear baby,
on the date _____ / _____ 20 _____



This picture is a memory for you, my baby.

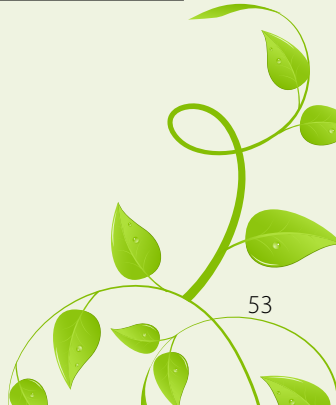
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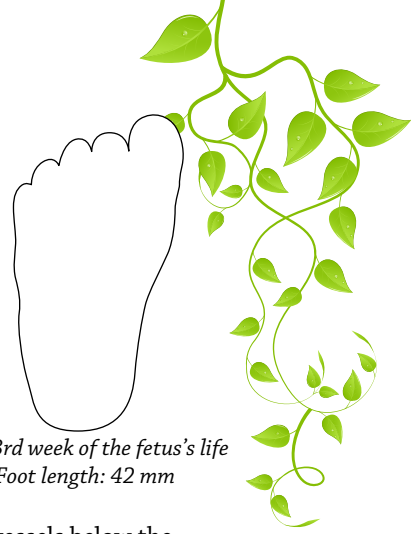
Have you felt the baby move? What kinds of movements have you noticed? What sorts of emotions has this created in you?



Have you noticed what situations or circumstances outside the womb the baby responds to? When does the baby move around more than usual?



Week 25



*The 23rd week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 42 mm*

The baby:

The baby's skin turns rosy pink as the small blood vessels below the skin (the capillaries) are formed. Even the blood vessels in the lungs are developing. The skin is wrinkly, because the connective tissue under the skin isn't there yet. The mouth and lips are very sensitive to touch. When the hand nears the mouth, the fetus automatically begins sucking on the thumb or other fingers. The grip is even stronger than a newborn's! From now on, the fetus could survive outside the womb (though he or she would need some assistance).

The mother:

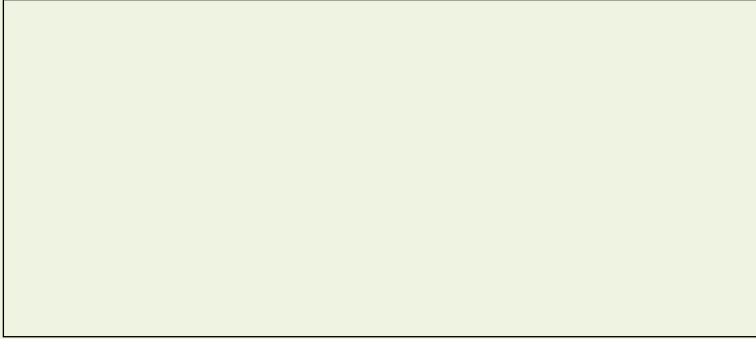
Your skin often itches as it stretches over the belly. You can relieve the itching with simple moisturizers, skin lotions, or oils. It can be relaxing to massage the belly, and the baby is able to feel caresses to your belly. If the muscles of the pelvic floor are in good condition, you will recover sooner after childbirth. This also prevents the uterus and bladder from experiencing prolapse (bulging).

Tips to remember:

It's good to exercise the pelvic floor muscles regularly. You can feel these muscles contract when, for example, you suck on your finger. With trained pelvic floor muscles, sexual pleasure may also be greater.

Sex does not harm the baby, but you may need to be creative in finding suitable positions.

Take a moment to pay attention to your baby. How do you think your child feels in the womb right now?



How did you feel when you saw the baby in the ultrasound scan? How did it feel to look at the picture?



Don't just do something. Stand there and pay attention. Your child is trying to tell you something.
Sally Provence



Week 26



*The 24th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 45 mm*

The baby:

The nostrils have started to open, and the fetus are making breathing movements at times. The lungs develop, as they are filled and rinsed by amniotic fluid. The amniotic fluid also supports fetal movements, provides protection, and keeps the fetus warm and clean. The fetus is still so small that there is plenty of space to move around inside your abdomen, and this helps to strengthen the baby's muscles day by day. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs about 800 grams.

The mother:

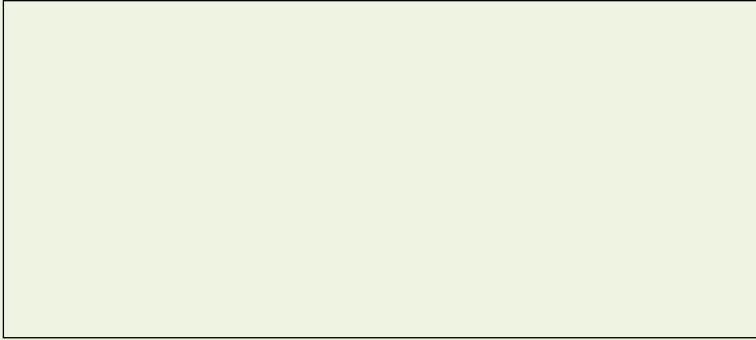
When you visit the maternity clinic, the staff will check your blood pressure, and a urine analysis will be performed. This is because high blood pressure and protein in the urine may point to a condition called pre-eclampsia, which can affect both the mother and the child. Symptoms of pre eclampsia include pain in your upper abdomen, headaches, disturbances to vision, and generally feeling unwell. If you detect any of these symptoms, you should contact the maternity clinic.

Tips to remember:

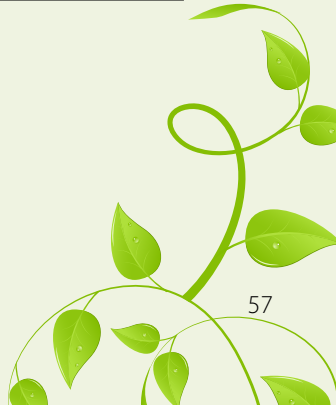
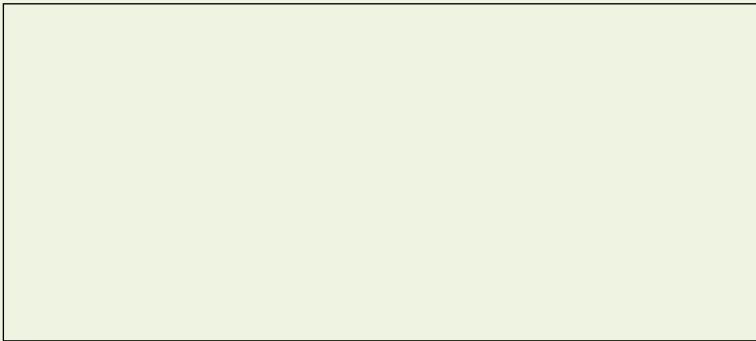
It's good to practice relaxing your muscles. If you learn to relax the pelvic floor muscles in particular, gynecological examinations and childbirth will be easier for you. Place a finger on your lips and blow.

While doing this, you may notice that your pelvic floor relaxes.

What events with the baby are you especially looking forward to? Which moments of childhood do you think will be the most beautiful to share in?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 27



*The 25th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 48 mm*

The baby:

The final third of the pregnancy (the last trimester) has begun. Inside the lungs, a substance called surfactant is being created that will help the baby breathe outside the womb. At the same time, the baby's brain is continuing to grow rapidly, and all of the senses are developing. The baby will grow more than a centimeter longer this week. .

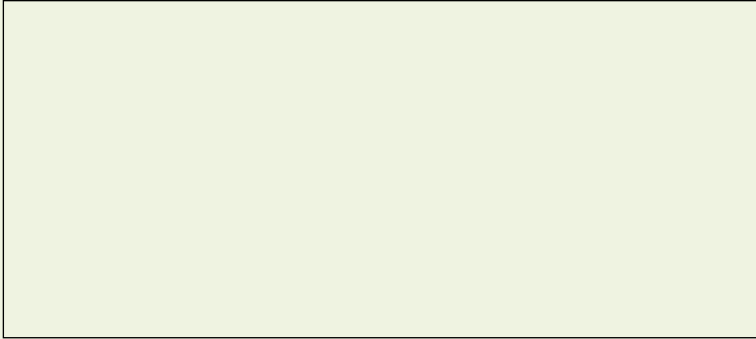
The mother:

During pregnancy, your mucous membranes become swollen. This may give you a stuffy nose. The changes in the mucous membranes might also increase the risk of fungal infections of the vagina. Also, your dreams may change. Issues that you are thinking about during the daytime may be reflected in your dreams. Often, one or several children may be present in the dreams.

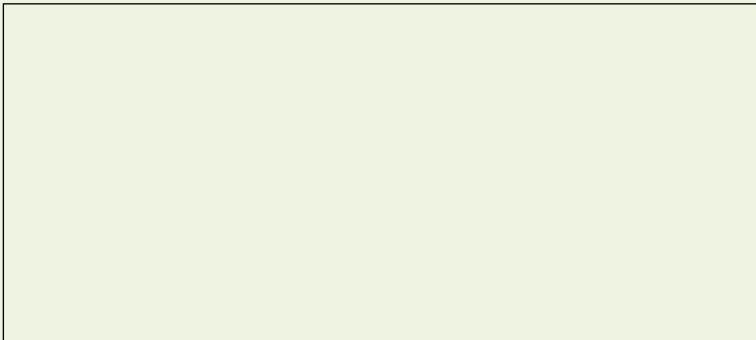
Tips to remember:

Dreams are the mind's way of processing both positive experiences – along with wishes and expectations – and also fears and worries. See your dreams as something that enriches the human mind. Don't attach too much importance to them. However, sometimes you may find it useful to talk with somebody about the thoughts and feelings prompted by your dreams.

What future situations involving the baby do you feel the most insecure about? Which situations do you think might be the most difficult for you?



Take a moment to think about what kinds of future situations with the child your partner or any other loved one might feel insecure about. What situations do you think will be the most difficult for him or her?



The children who are appreciated for what they are [...] will grow up with confidences in themselves - happy.

Benjamin Spock



Week 28



*The 26th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 50 mm*

The baby:

The fetus is beginning to show a clear sleep pattern. Fetal movement becomes stronger as the muscles gain strength. You may find yourself awakened because of that strength at night. The eyelids begin to open slowly, and the fetus can sense light. The sucking and swallowing movements are constantly developing; the fetus is practicing skills that will enable coping with life outside the womb. At this point, the baby weighs about a kilogram.

The mother:

Those butterflies in your stomach are getting easier and easier to identify as the baby's movements. You may even be able to distinguish between hand and leg movements. At times, you might be able to detect the day-to-day rhythm of the fetus's body clock. For instance, the fetus usually wakes up when the mother is still and sleeps when the mother is moving. However, all children are individuals right from the start, even in the way they move.

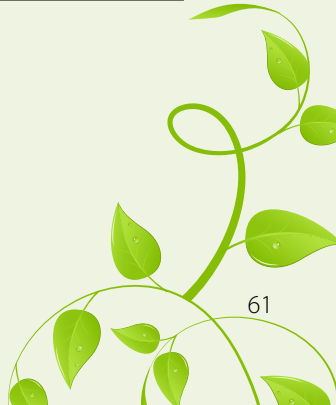
Tips to remember:

Every pregnant mother's body has a unique shape and size. You can be proud of your body, whatever it looks and feels like – it is performing an important task right now! You might want to take a picture of your belly today and give it to the child later on, when you want to share a memory. It might be interesting for the child to look at the picture, and you can use the photo as an aid when talking about the time you were expecting him or her.

Do you remember the moment when it dawned on you that you are actually expecting a baby? What kind of situation made this real for you? What was that moment like?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 29



*The 27th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 53 mm*

The baby:

As the fat stores under the skin increase, the skin gets softer and smoother. The fetus is reacting more and more to light, sounds, tastes, and smells. The sense of touch is well-developed. As for sight, the world inside the uterus looks pink – the light enters through the abdominal walls' blood vessels. The baby's brain is now able to regulate breathing and body temperature. At this stage, some babies would be able to survive outside the womb without the aid of a respirator.

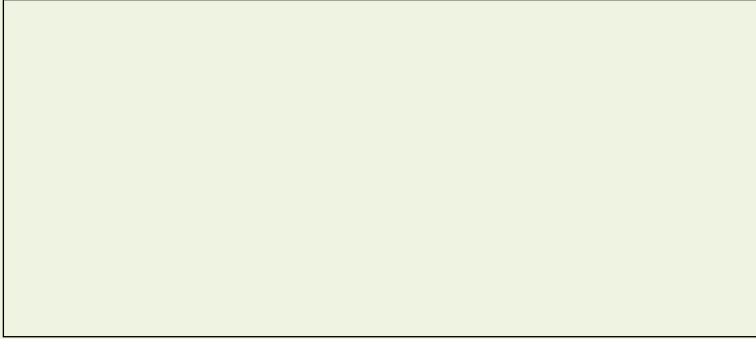
The mother:

At times, you may feel pain in the pelvic region: in the pubic joint and groin, at the insides of the thighs, or in the hip region. This pain is caused by the movement of the pelvic bones, and it may help a lot to remember that the pain will disappear after delivery. Because the uterus is pressed against your bladder, you will probably need to visit the toilet more often than before.

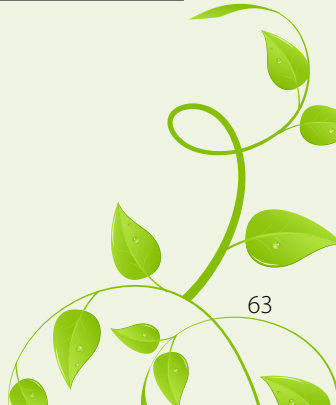
Tips to remember:

If you suffer from pain in the pubic region, you should try to avoid large stretching motions and long strides. It may be easier to sleep if you lie on your side and place a pillow between your legs. You can strengthen the gluteal muscles by squatting and then standing. Also, you can make the deep abdominal and back muscles stronger by getting down on all fours and lifting the opposite arm and leg, alternating. In addition to good muscle tone, you may find a support belt around the pelvis helpful. If necessary, a physiotherapist at the health center is available to offer ideas and assistance.

Have you noticed that your mood or something you are doing affects the baby in the womb? What have you noticed?



Have you talked to the baby or tried to get in touch with him or her by pressing lightly on the belly? How did you feel? Have you noticed the child responding to you sometimes?



Week 30



The baby:

The skin is smooth, but the brain is getting more wrinkly. Within these wrinkles, more advanced brain functions are developing.

The fetus is ready to hear your voice, recognize your scent, and taste the milk you will make. The fetus is capable of eye movements now, and the eyes are open almost all the time. At night or when you are wearing a lot of clothes, it is dark in the womb. The fetus is learning about sight, and your child will be able to distinguish between clear reds, greens, and yellows when born.

*The 28th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 55 mm*

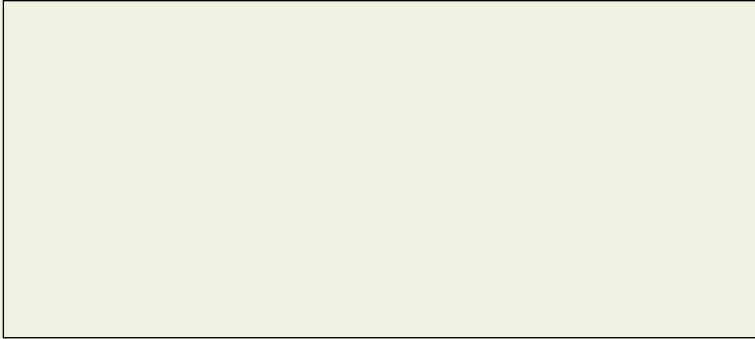
The mother:

The fetus gets used to various flavors in the womb because your diet changes the taste of the amniotic fluid. It seems logical that the taste of the amniotic fluid could influence what flavors the child will start to like! Your sleep may become fragmented, because of back pain, restless legs, or perhaps the baby wanting company. If you can, try to listen to the baby and enjoy even the moments when you can't sleep.

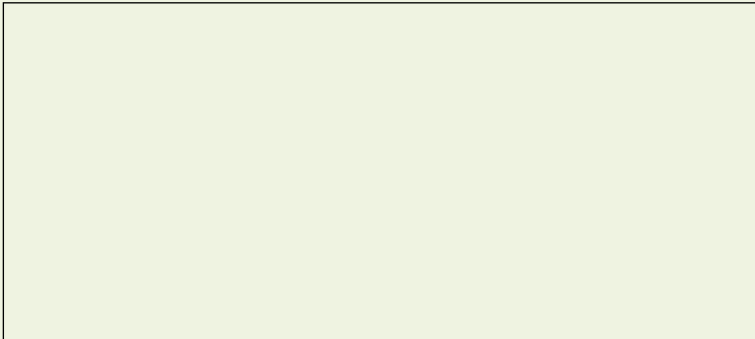
Tips to remember:

Listening to soothing music may calm the baby. When the baby gets used to a certain kind of music, that music may have a calming effect even after birth. If you talk with and sing to the baby while pregnant, the baby will recognize these familiar voices after the birth. Even other sounds in the home grow familiar to the baby in the womb. The baby probably has some sort of memory already.

To the partner or another person who is close to the baby:
Have you already felt the movements of the baby by touching the mother's belly? If so, do you remember what you thought when you felt these movements for the first time?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 31



The baby:

The brain is still developing. Also, the baby is diligently practicing the skills he or she will need after birth – for example, sucking. The space for movement in the uterus decreases as the baby grows. It may be more comfortable for the baby to choose a head-down position, curling around in the “fetal position,” with the legs folded in towards the chest. In boys, the testicles will descend from the abdomen into the scrotum before birth. In girls, the ovaries move into the pelvis.

*The 29th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 58 mm*

The mother:

You're thinking of the baby more and more throughout the day. As the pregnancy continues, your emotions may get more intense – and that is normal. This can be a time of significant personal growth: you are still you, but you are also becoming a parent to your baby. Sometimes it can be difficult to handle all the feelings, and you may experience emotional overload. Talk to your loved ones, and also mention this to the staff at the maternity clinic. You are not alone.

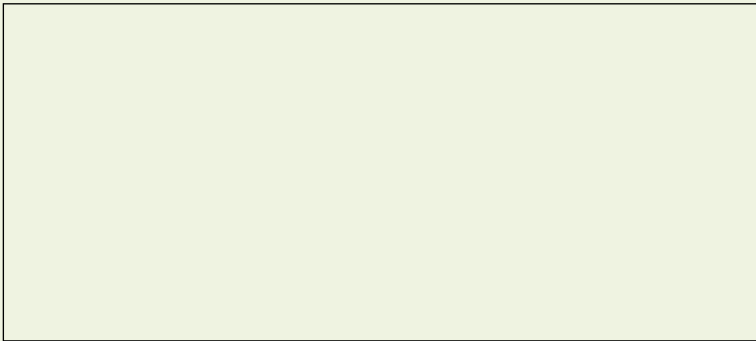
Tips to remember:

You may have prepared your home for the baby's arrival already and even made some purchases. Have you thought about where the baby will sleep and where you will take care of him or her? These preparations are clearly important. On the other hand, don't let this cause stress or remove joy from these moments: remember that the baby needs parents first and foremost, not things.

Have you started thinking about a good name for the baby?
If so, where does the name come from?

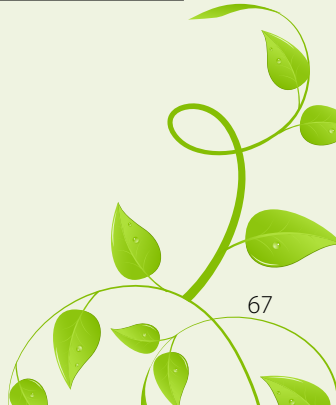


What kinds of things do you think are important for the baby
in your home? What places or colors do you think the baby will
especially enjoy in the home where he or she will start out?



Listen carefully to the child – you will learn a lot.

G. Weinberg



Week 32



*The 30th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 60 mm*

The baby:

The basic five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) have already developed.

The fetus may turn towards light that comes from outside, for instance. The sense of smell is ready to work, but it only begins to function after birth, when the baby starts breathing air. When the baby is born, the sense of touch is the most sensitive and most fully developed.

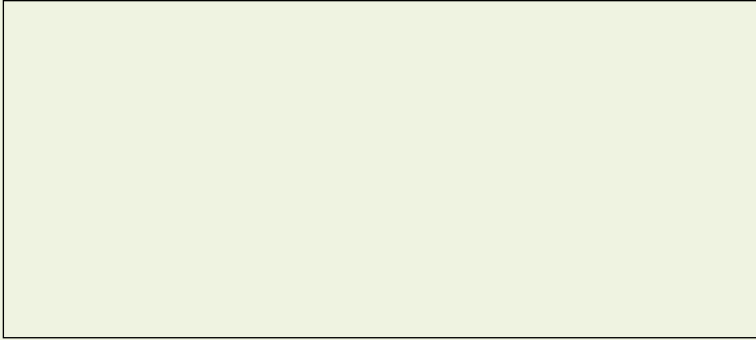
The mother:

The baby's orientation and posture in the womb affect the shape of your belly. This is one reason your belly may be very different from another mom's belly. The movements of the baby can now be seen from the outside. You can also feel the baby more easily through your belly, and sometimes you can get a direct response.

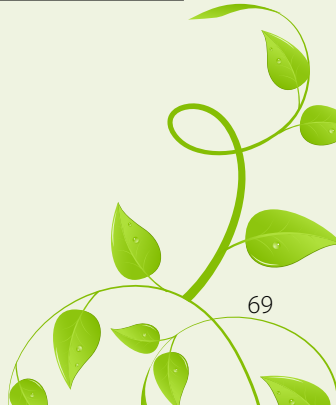
Tips to remember:

Continue to get regular exercise, and remember to strengthen your deep abdominal and back muscles. This is good for both you and your baby, during and after the delivery. As the posture of your back changes, the shoulder muscles can become tense very easily. You could ask someone close to you to relieve the tension by massaging your back with, for example, a tennis ball.

Is your baby quick to remind you about his or her existence?
Thinking about your experience, what kind of personality do
you expect that the baby might have?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that
you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 33



*The 31st week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 63 mm*

The baby:

The fat tissue gets thicker, and the fetus begins to look like a newborn baby more and more. The fetus may have settled high up (near your lungs) or lower down (towards the pelvis). Although movement is more restricted, the fetus is still exploring its surroundings – especially with the mouth, by touching, sucking, and licking things in the environment. The umbilical cord extending from the placenta to the fetus is about half a meter long now. The fetus plays with the umbilical cord and may squeeze it, but the cord cannot be damaged by this.

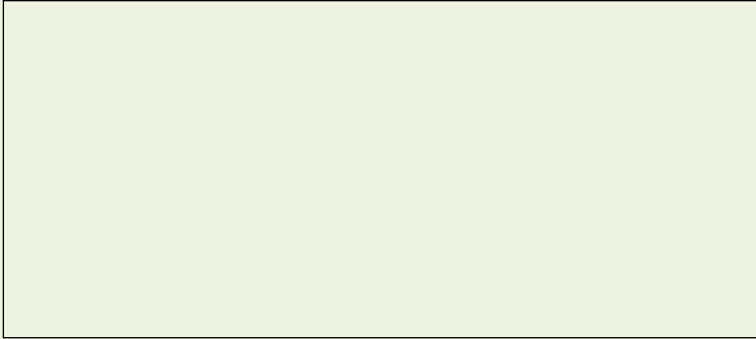
The mother:

As the baby and the uterus grow, you may feel small annoyances associated with a normal pregnancy: You might get out of breath sooner than usual, because the uterus presses up against the diaphragm. It is also common to experience some swelling of the arms and legs – the legs might feel tired, and jewelry such as rings may feel tight. Also, your hands may feel numb and clumsy in the morning. Some mothers get varicose veins.

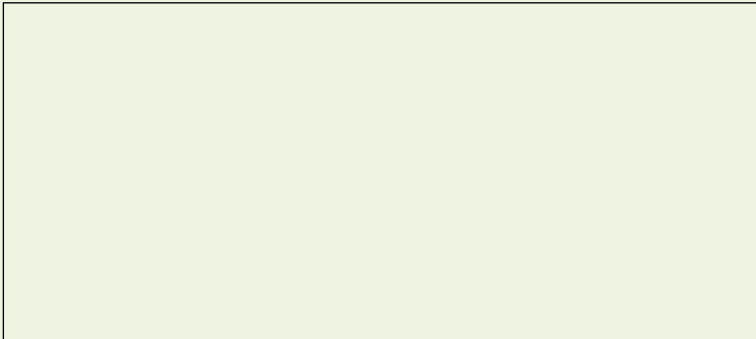
Tips to remember:

Sometimes, it helps to rest the legs and keep them raised for a while. Rotating your ankles might bring additional relief. Remember to rest and relax every day. Sitting in a rocking chair is especially good both for you and for the baby. When attending the maternity clinics antenatal classes, you will get advice on family planning, pregnancy, childbirth, and the time after birth. It is good for the father to participate as well, because the life of both parents will change.

Life is going to change when the baby is born. When you reflect on the changes, do they scare you? What do you find especially scary?



Take a moment to think about whether any of the coming changes seem to worry your partner or another person close to you. What do you think concerns him or her especially?



Reach out to a child who needs you, and you will experience great joy.

Flavia



Week 34

The baby:

Just like a newborn's, the eyes of your baby are open in the waking hours and closed during sleep. At birth, a baby's eyes are usually blue. Later, the permanent eye color begins to appear – once the eyes have been exposed to daylight for a couple of weeks.

The fetus is already big enough to be leaning against the wall of the uterus more than floating freely in the amniotic fluid. This week, your baby grows more than one centimeter longer and weighs just over two kilograms.

*The 32nd week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 65 mm*

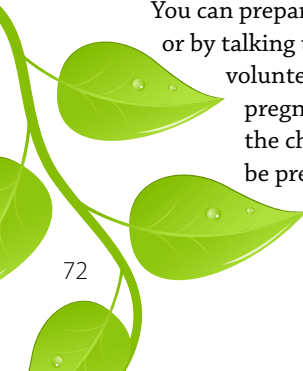


The mother:

Your body begins to prepare more swiftly for the birth. The breasts are already prepared for their new role, and they may secrete a yellowish form of milk, called colostrum, that offers a highly nutritious start for a baby. The impending birth and life with the child make most moms and dads more contemplative and tense. If the birth feels scary, tell the public-health nurse at the maternity clinic.

Tips to remember:

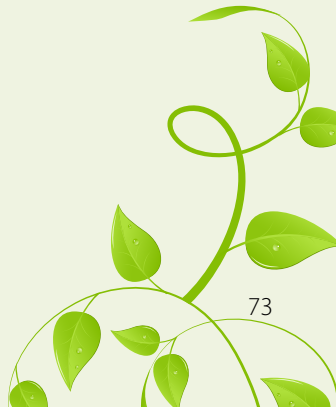
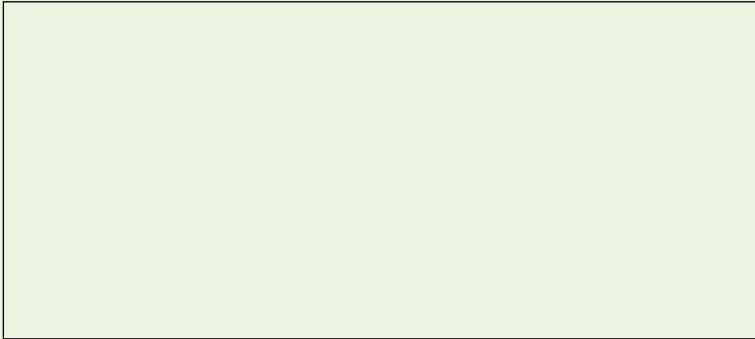
You can prepare for childbirth by getting more information about it or by talking to friends, relatives, and acquaintances. In many places, volunteers called doulas are available to provide support during pregnancy. You can discuss anything and everything related to the child and birth with a doula, and you may also ask her to be present at the delivery if you wish. If you're nervous about labor and child-birth, remember that you should trust yourself and your body – you are built to cope with the task.



Is there already an emotional bond between you and your baby? How would you describe it?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 35

The baby:

The fat reserves under the skin are still increasing. This fat helps keep the fetus's body temperature stable and also contains stored energy. The skin is a healthy pink. If you could place your finger in the baby's hand, he or she would now grab your finger with a strong grip.



*The 33rd week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 68 mm*

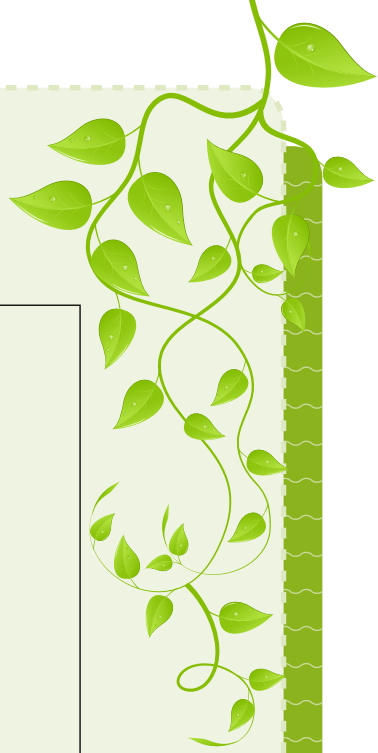
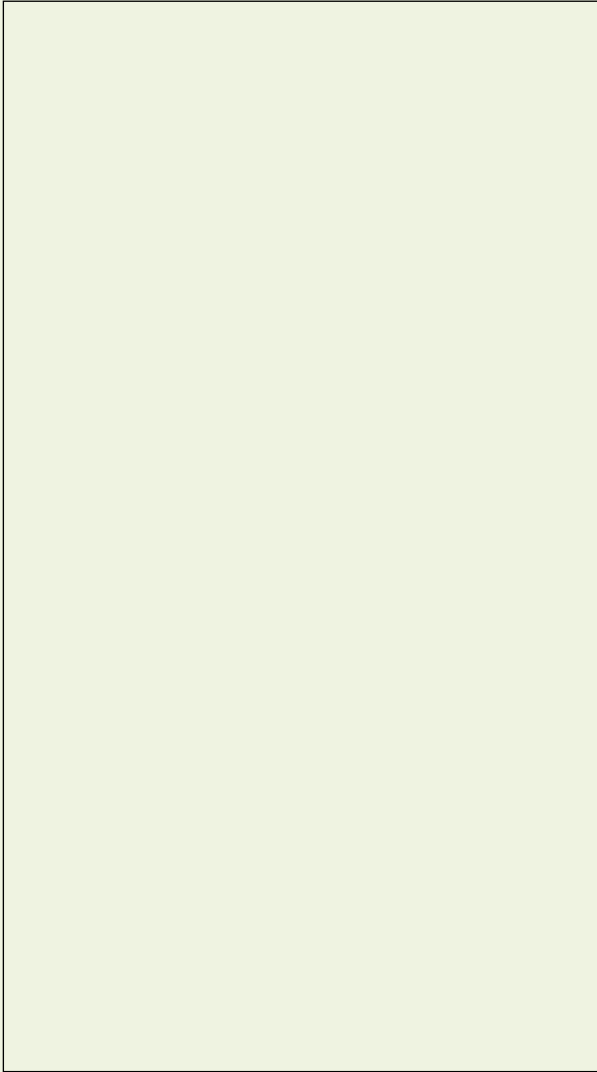
The mother:

Sometimes you may feel very tired, at other times very energetic. Your appetite level too may vary greatly. You and the baby still need a lot of iron. Continue to eat small meals throughout the day, because the baby needs nutrients even if you have a very low appetite.

Tips to remember:

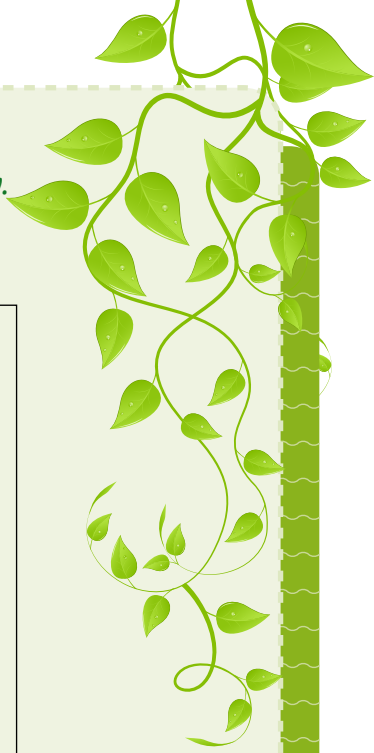
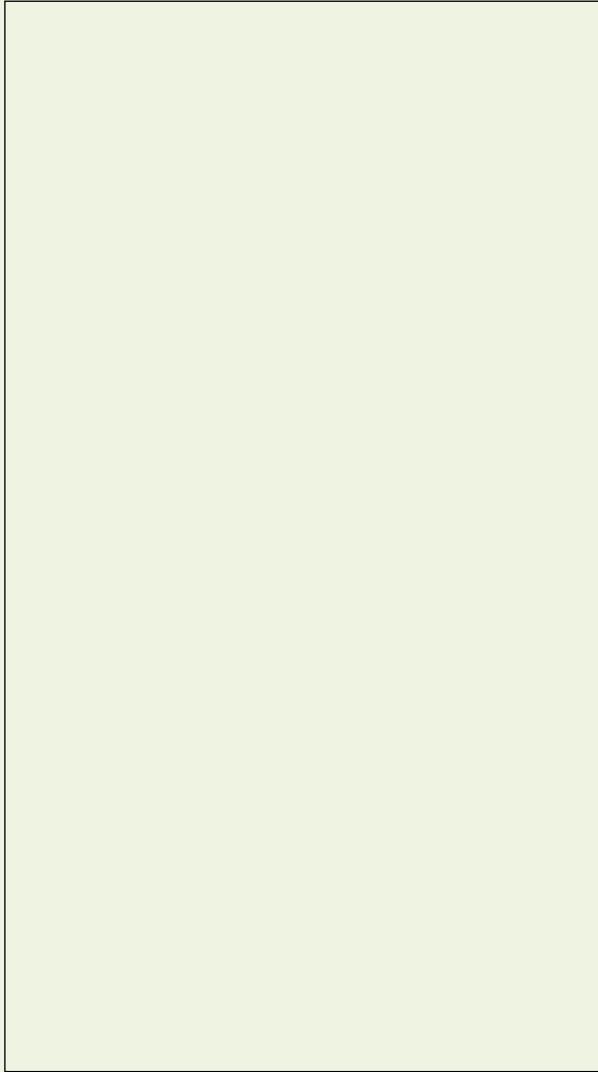
You can still exercise and take care of normal day-to-day routines. You will have more time to spend with the baby later if you have prepared in advance by putting conveniently sized portions of food in the freezer, to be warmed up easily after the baby is born. Your partner or another person close to you can help with this.

Greetings to you, my dear baby,
on the date _____ / _____ 20 _____

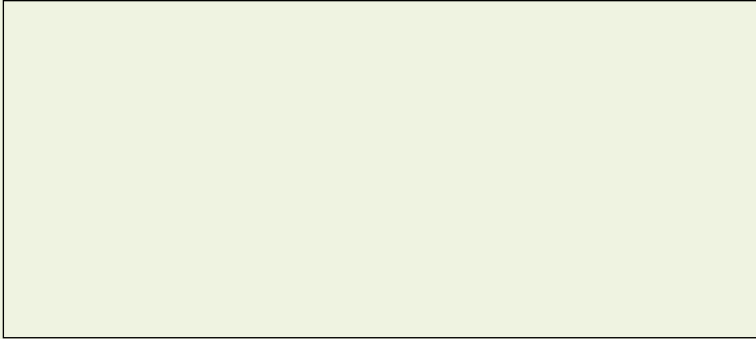


This picture is a memory for you, my baby.

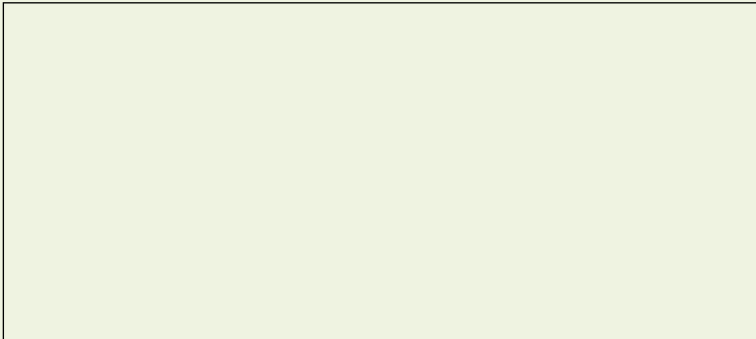
Date: _____ / _____ 20____



The due date is approaching. What kinds of feelings and thoughts are you experiencing right now? There may be many kinds.



Take a moment to think about what kinds of feelings and thoughts this might be arising in your partner or another person close to you.



Happy is the one who takes delight in his children.

Thomas Fuller



Week 36

The baby:

The meconium that forms in the intestines, your baby's first poop, consists of downy lanugo, dead cells, and amniotic fluid. The baby empties the meconium from the intestines a few hours after birth. During pregnancy, antibodies are transported from mother to baby through the placenta. These antibodies protect the fetus and the newborn against various infections. In addition, the baby manufactures antibodies of his or her own.



*The 34th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 70 mm*


The mother:

When the baby moves further down in the womb, you will start feeling better, and it should get easier to breathe. The urge to urinate may increase further, though. Around this time in the pregnancy, you will meet the doctor at the maternity clinic to discuss possible ways of delivering the baby.

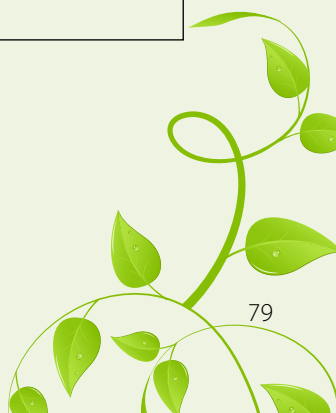
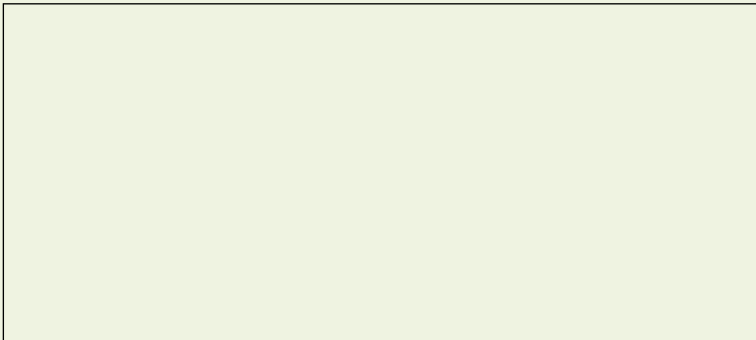
Tips to remember:

Now it's time to "recharge your batteries": read books, watch good movies, sing, and listen to music. Plan what you need to bring with you to the maternity hospital. In the hospital bag, you can include such things as comfortable clothing for the baby. What would you like the hospital to pay attention to? What is important to you? What do you each expect from each other during the delivery?

When you think about the future of your child, which age or stage of childhood and development are you especially looking forward to? What stage do you think will bring you the most joy?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 37

The baby:

The skeleton hasn't hardened completely. This allows the bones to shift and compress during delivery, which makes it easier for the baby to travel down the birth canal. The bones of the skull are flexible, with gaps between the plates of bone, allowing the head to match the shape of the birth canal. The hands and feet of the fetus can now be felt through the wall of the abdomen, since it's getting pretty crowded in the abdominal cavity. These will feel like small bubbles. The fetus may have a lot of hair already. At the end of the week, the fetus weighs almost three kilograms.



*The 35th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 73 mm*

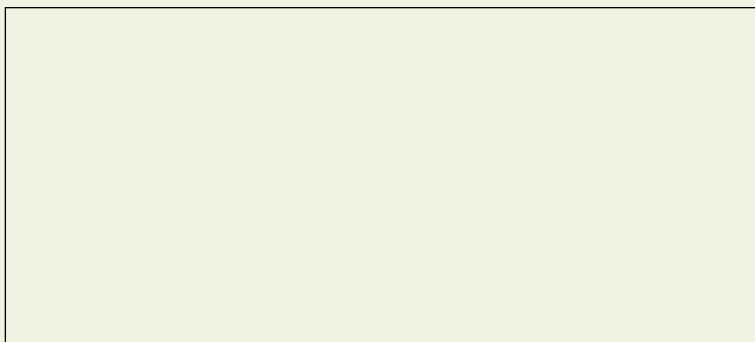
The mother:

As birth approaches, contractions may become more powerful. While the pre-labor contractions are taking place, the neck of the uterus, at the cervix, is prepared for labor. When the cervix begins to open, it starts secreting mucus. Pre-labor contractions are different from the contractions during labor, which are regular, painful motions that make it hard to concentrate on anything else. They have a very important task: pushing the baby towards birth.

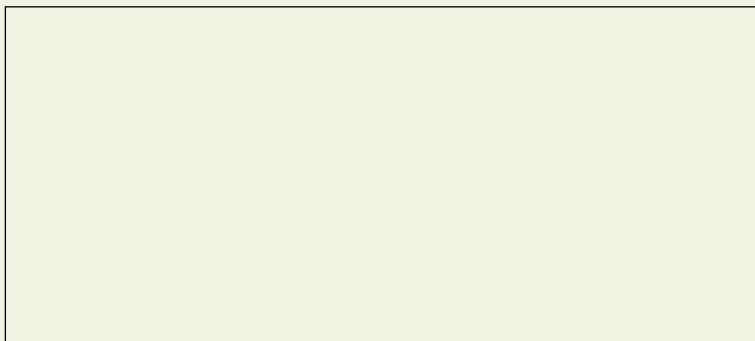
Tips to remember:

Remember to listen to your thoughts and your body over the coming weeks and to get enough rest. In the first few weeks outside your body, the baby needs skin-to-skin contact and intense closeness. Breast milk has many good properties and can provide exactly what the little baby needs. What are your thoughts on breast-feeding, and what are your wishes? What does your partner think about this?

Has the baby given any indication of how he or she might be feeling right now? How do you think the baby is doing inside your belly?

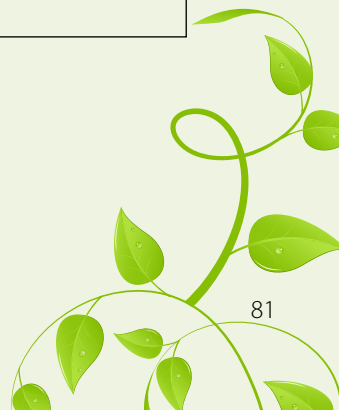


What kinds of thoughts, desires, or feelings come to the surface when you think about the first face-to-face meeting between you and your child?



Give a little love to a child, and you get a great deal back.

John Ruskin



Week 38



*The 36th week of the fetus's age
Foot length: 75 mm*

The baby:

About 2–4 weeks before the birth, the fetus usually moves lower down into the pelvis, typically with the head downward. However, it is difficult to predict the exact timing of childbirth, because every pregnancy follows its own timetable.

Almost 90% of children are born within two weeks before or after the estimated delivery date. A protective layer of special wax still covers the skin. Although the amount of this vernix decreases during the final part of the pregnancy, the remaining wax is enough to make the motions of birth easier. Also, it protects the baby's tender skin for the first few days.

The mother:

The weeks ahead are a waiting game. Make a conscious effort to relax during your daily chores. It's also important to try to relax once the labor contractions have started and during childbirth itself. By this point, you might feel very clumsy and want to have your belly back for yourself. But, believe it or not, you will probably miss being able to feel the baby's little kicks from inside!

Tips to remember:

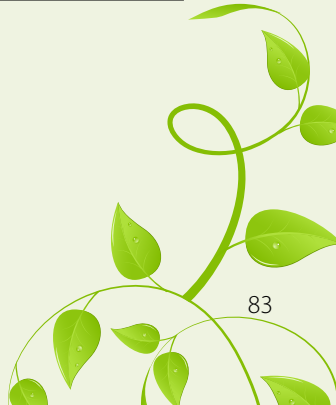
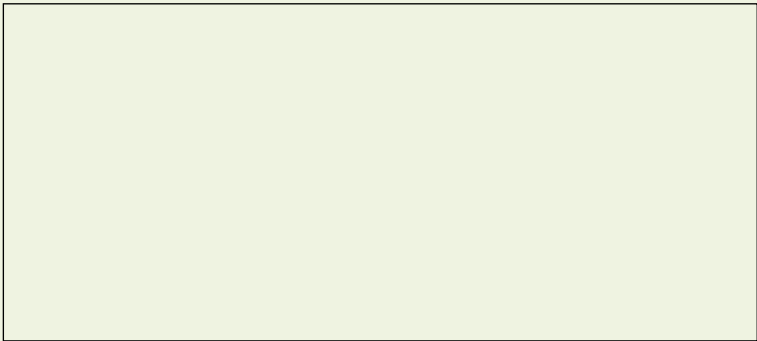
Doing something you enjoy will help to keep you in a good mood.

What do you like doing? What do you hope to do with your child when he or she is a little older? Remember that suitable exercise helps both you and the baby feel good. Dancing to nice music and swimming are some of the exercise types that are suitable even in the final days of pregnancy. This exercise can be a fun family activity.

When you think about the future with your child, which stage of development do you think will be most challenging for you? What do you feel will be the easiest?



Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Week 39

The baby:

In the last few weeks of pregnancy, the fetus grows more slowly. The production of surfactant in the fetus's lungs increases, and the downy layer of lanugo on the skin begins to disappear. At birth, the baby has more than 70 separate reflexes that are going to help him or her survive outside the womb. The grip of the fetus's hand is becoming more powerful, and the reflex for grabbing things is strong.



*The 37th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 78 mm*

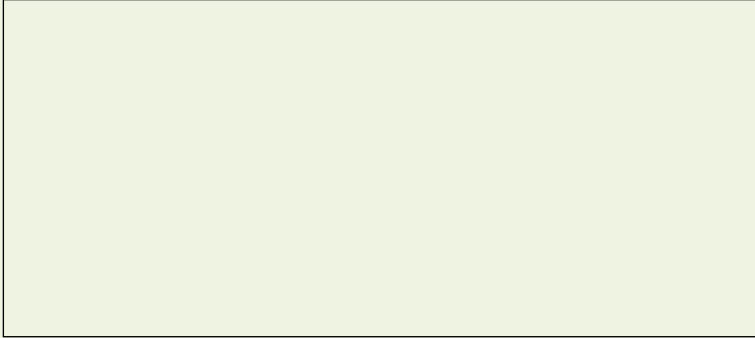
The mother:

Many mothers become restless, and you may feel that time is dragging. Labor will begin when the time is right. You may feel that you are dragging too – moving more awkwardly and slowly. However, the pace of life is slower now by design, because the baby's pace is slow.

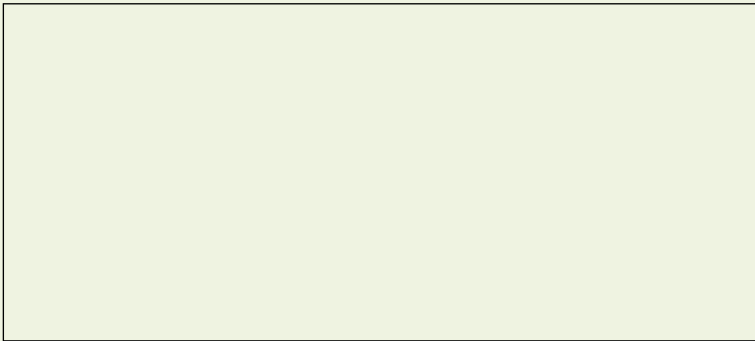
Tips to remember:

The grip reflex can be helpful during breast-feeding. This tip may help after the baby is born: the baby might suck on your nipple more vigorously if you let him or her grab your finger, your skin, or your clothes at the same time. It will benefit the baby also if the mother is allowed some enjoyment now and then. You can think about what you might enjoy, then ask your partner or another loved one to arrange it.

Do you find that the baby already increased your awareness somehow? How?

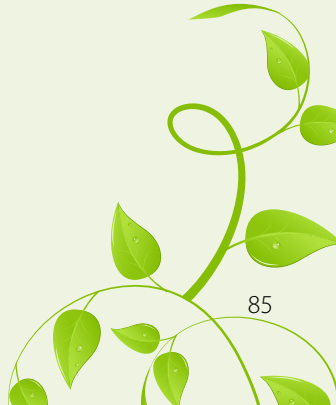


What would you like to say to the baby or ask the baby right now?



Children need love, especially when they don't deserve it.

Harold S. Hulbert



Week 40

The baby:

The baby's birth is predicted for the end of this week! At birth, an average child weighs 3.7 kg and is about 50 cm long. Boys are, on average, slightly longer and heavier than girls. The newborn's face looks small in comparison to the head: the chin is small, and the facial bones are not fully developed yet. Your child's face will change as the sinus system grows. This process will continue until the fourth year of life.



*The 38th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 80 mm*

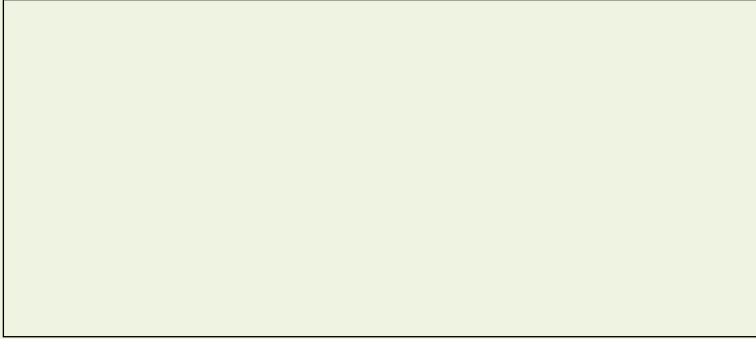
The mother:

Labor starts with either contractions or rupturing of the amniotic sac's membranes (known as your water breaking). As labor progresses, the contractions get stronger and more painful, and they continue even if you change position. Each contraction lasts approximately 30–90 seconds. When the cervix has expanded enough that it isn't an obstacle to the child's head, midwives usually say the cervix is "fully dilated." If you aren't sure whether labor has started, you can call the hospital to ask for advice.

Tips to remember:

The mother's milk is a fantastic product: it provides more antibodies from the mother and supplies nutrients that the baby needs. This milk nourishes the skin also: both your nipples and the baby's skin. A newborn can tell the difference between the mother's unique milk and other breast milk! Remember that breastfeeding is a joint effort between the mother and the baby. Sometimes it succeeds from the very start, or it might require a little more practice. For example, it normally begins more slowly if the mother had a Caesarean section. If breastfeeding is impossible for some reason, the child will still enjoy the smell and taste of the breast and have fun examining it.

Imagine that your baby could ask you something. What do you think the baby would like to know about his or her family?

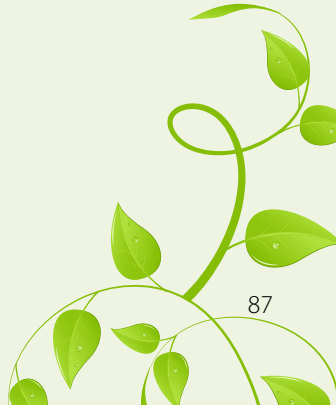


Is there any experience, situation, or event from this week that you remember especially well? What was that?



Babies are such a nice way to start people.

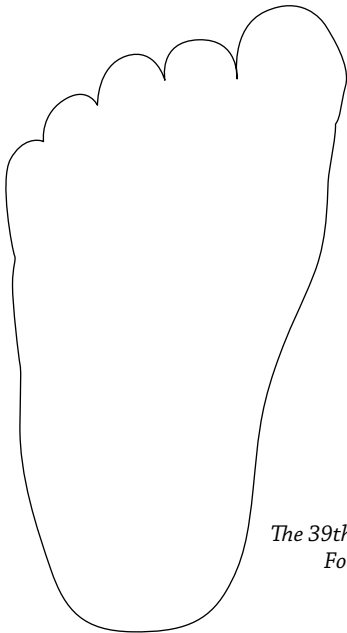
Don Herold



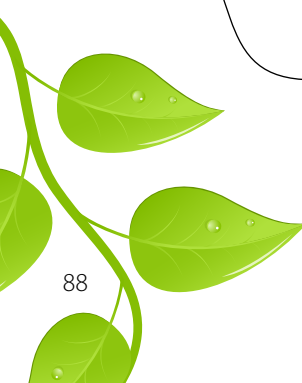
Weeks 41 and 42

The estimated delivery date came and went, but don't worry – the birth process will start in due course. Each child is unique and is born in accordance with his or her own timetable.

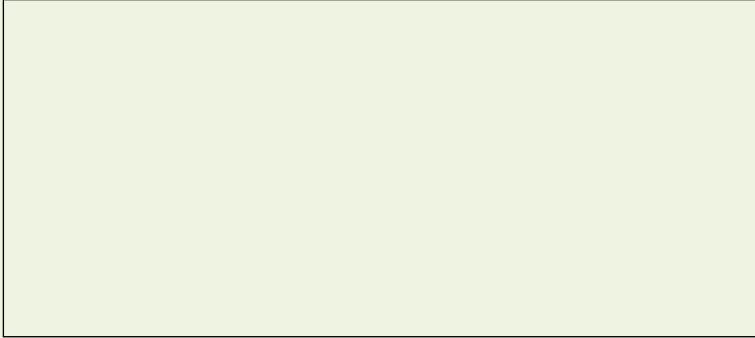
A baby is considered to be “overdue” when the pregnancy has lasted 14 days longer than expected – when the number of full-term pregnancy weeks is 42. At this stage, delivery can be induced at the hospital.



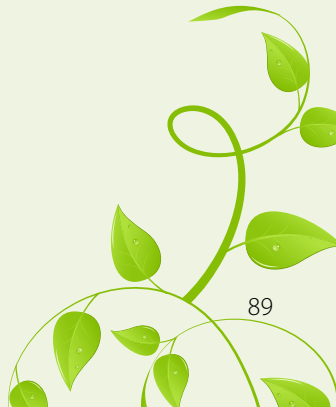
*The 39th week of the fetus's life
Foot length: 83 mm*



What kinds of thoughts, feelings, or events have you experienced this week?



*For there is no king that had any other beginning of birth.
For all men have one entrance into life, and the like going out.
King James Bible, Apocrypha (Wisdom of Solomon 7:5–6)*



Arrival of a new family member

As time passes and the child grows, these early days and the atmosphere of this time may easily be forgotten, no matter how memorable everything may now seem. For each child, the situation is unique and involves many kinds of thoughts, emotions, and sensations.

How do you remember the day when you left home for the delivery?

How did you find the experience of the birth of your child?

How do you think your partner or any other close friend or support person found this experience of childbirth?

How do you think the baby found the experience of birth and the time at the hospital?

How would you describe the feelings that flooded through you when you first saw your baby?

How did you find your first few days with the baby?

What was it like to come home with the baby? Which moment do you remember best?

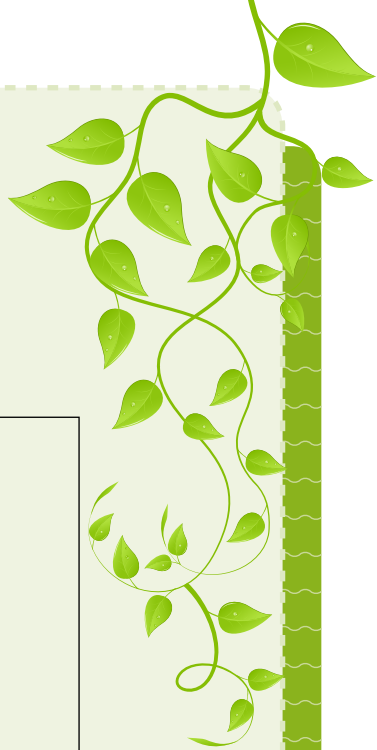
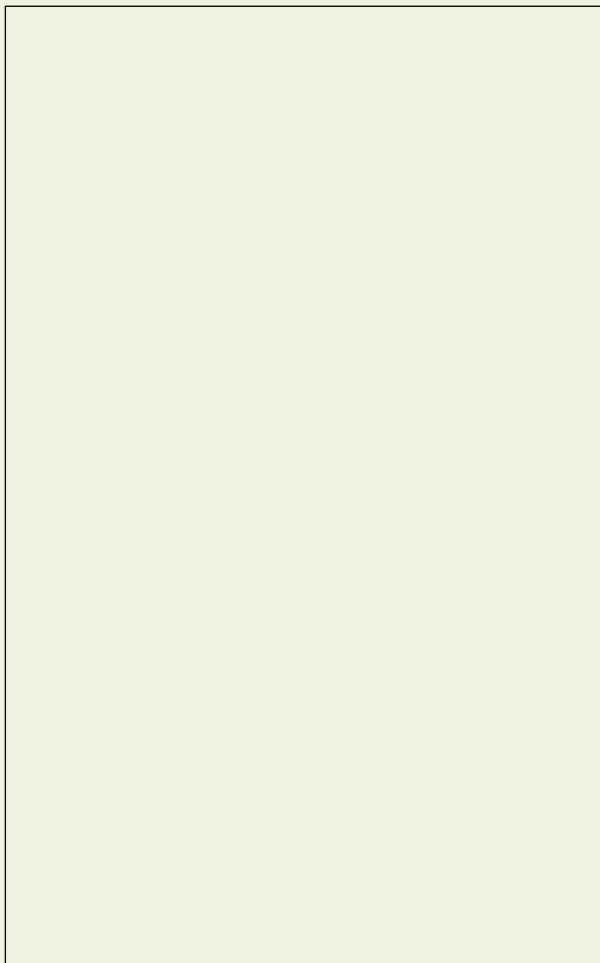
Which moment with the baby has been the most memorable for you so far?

If you had three wishes for your child's future, what would they be?

Warm congratulations to all of you who were part of the journey!

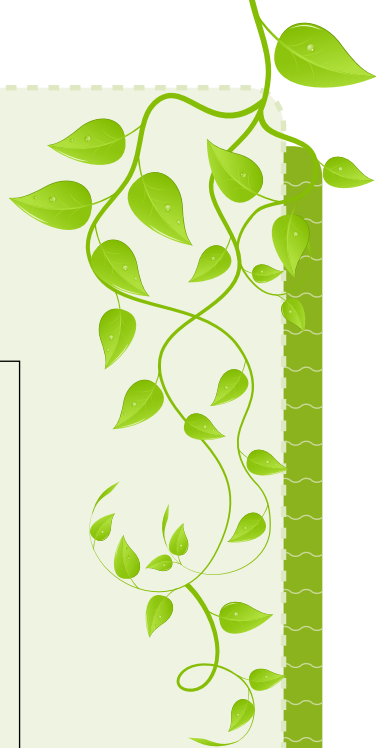
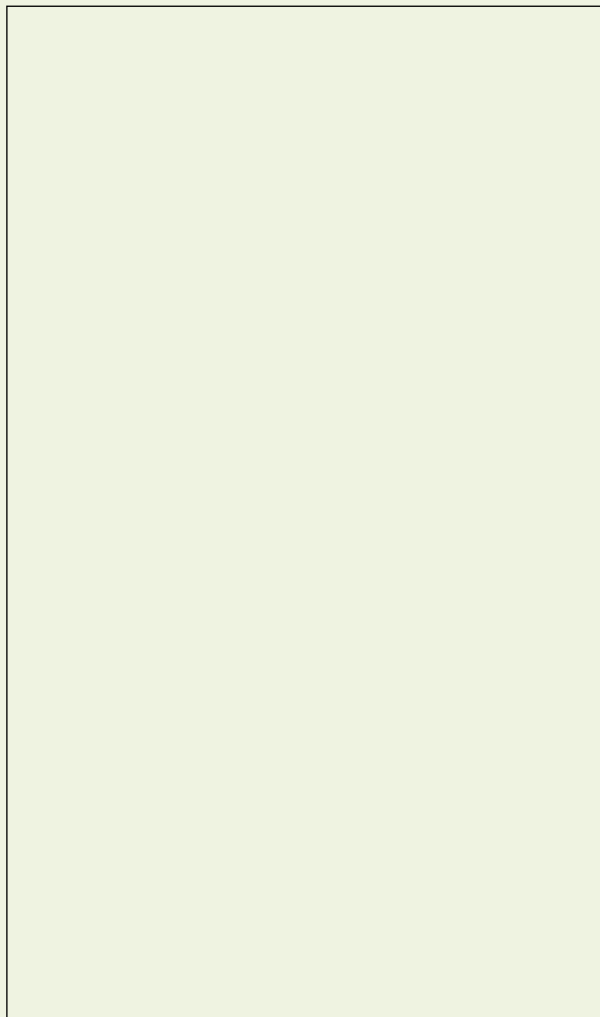
*Greetings to you, my baby,
from the very first days of
your life, on the date*

_____ / _____ 20_____



*Here is a photograph of you as
a newborn as you greeted us, on*

_____ / _____ 20_____





The working group

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We are constantly working to develop the diary further, making it more user-friendly and available for every expectant family. If you wish to support our work, we would be incredibly grateful for your contribution:

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