

Pregnancy Guide

Pregnancy Week By Week



**VOICES
FROM
THE
WOMB**

EINAT L.K.

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Pregnancy Guide

Voices from the womb

Pregnancy Week By Week



Written By: Einat L. K.

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First edition – 06/2014

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Digital Edition 2014



Spirala Publishing
contact@spiralaPublishing.com
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Ordering Information:

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Voices from the womb: Pregnancy Week By Week / Einat L.K. - 1st ed.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations!

If you've reading this, you must either be planning to get pregnant, or already are pregnant. This aim of this book is to help you keep track of your pregnancy in a fun and meaningful way.

Only a select number of women get to the experience the miracle of pregnancy. It is a life-changing time for your body and your heart as you help to grow and nourish a budding life from within. With all of the change, it's also a serious time for reflection for many women. Once you've had a child, your life will never be quite as it was before.

For each of your pregnancy weeks, you'll get an insider's perspective – that is, your baby's view – on how he or she is developing inside the womb and what changes you might be seeing or feeling.

You can also find this information in a journal format.

Keeping a journal can help you collect your thoughts, make key decisions for your future as a parent, and better observe the subtle shifts in your body and mind from week to chaotic week.

Taking a few moments to reflect on your pregnancy and yourself is a rewarding and enriching experience. Plus, you'll have a wonderful keepsake of this special time in your life – one you can even share with your child in the future.

[Click here to purchase the journal](#)

Wishing you a wonderful, healthy pregnancy.

Enjoy.

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WEEK 1 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Here we go! At this point, you likely won't know that you're pregnant just yet because well, you aren't. Doctors find it really tough to determine the exact date the lucky egg and sperm that are teaming up to form me will actually meet, so they calculate your pregnancy from the first day of your last period. Usually I won't actually 'be made' until about 14 days after your final pre-pregnancy period, so for now, consider me just an egg waiting for some sperm to form an embryo.

Because I'm still just an idea, you won't actually be experiencing much change right now. You'll have your last period – so whether you consider it a blessing or a curse, say goodbye to your monthly visitor because your period won't be coming back until after you've delivered me. In fact, if you breastfeed, you'll actually put off your period for a little while longer.

If you're looking to take me from an idea to conception, now's the time to start taking care of yourself. Some habits can be stressful to a baby and your reproductive system. If you drink, smoke or do drugs, phase those things out for a happier, healthier pregnancy. There are also a few things my dad should think about as well. First of all, if you're trying to conceive, avoid tons of heat from sources like hot tubs, electric blankets, or heated beds. Studies have shown too much warmth can slow down sperm production, which we definitely don't want. Also, you'll want to skip oral sex before having intercourse and avoid most lubricants – both can kill sperm! Finally, as we get started on this journey together, remember:

“Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.” – Elizabeth Stone (Author, A Boy I Once Knew)

Love,

Baby

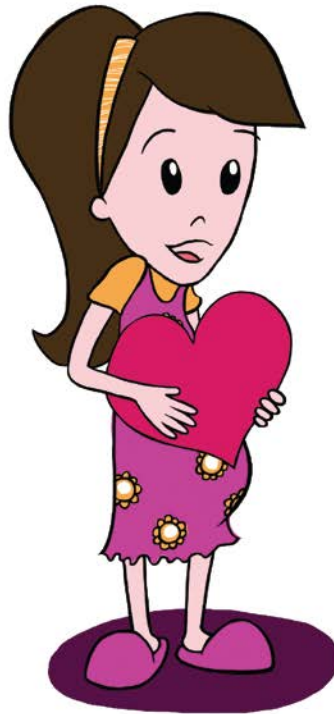
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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**This pregnancy is
very special**



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WEEK 2 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

As of right now, I'm still pretty much just an idea. Like I told you last week, doctors will calculate your pregnancy from the first day of your last period. Conception should be taking place toward the end of this week – meaning I'm one step closer to becoming an embryo! For now, I'm an egg waiting on the millions and millions of sperm from my dad to make their way up your fallopian tubes. Of course, only one of those sperm will actually make me, but it's the journey that counts, isn't it? Once dad's sperm and your egg combine, they'll start dividing over and over again – in fact I'll begin doubling in size every twelve hours. Don't worry though, I'm so tiny at this point, you won't feel a thing just yet. A few days after conception, I'll take about 7 to 10 days to start traveling back down your fallopian tubes to set up shop in your uterus for the next 38 weeks.

Truth be told, you simply won't know if you're pregnant at this point because conception will be happening during week 2. Your last period should be over and you should be ovulating like normal.

If you're really excited to have me, it's a good idea to track when you're ovulating. The natural family planning method uses your body temperature and vaginal discharge to help you figure out when the best time is to try and conceive. You can also get an ovulation test kit from the drugstore, but keep in mind the cost can add up pretty fast if you consistently use it. And remember, both you and my dad should be taking care of yourselves.

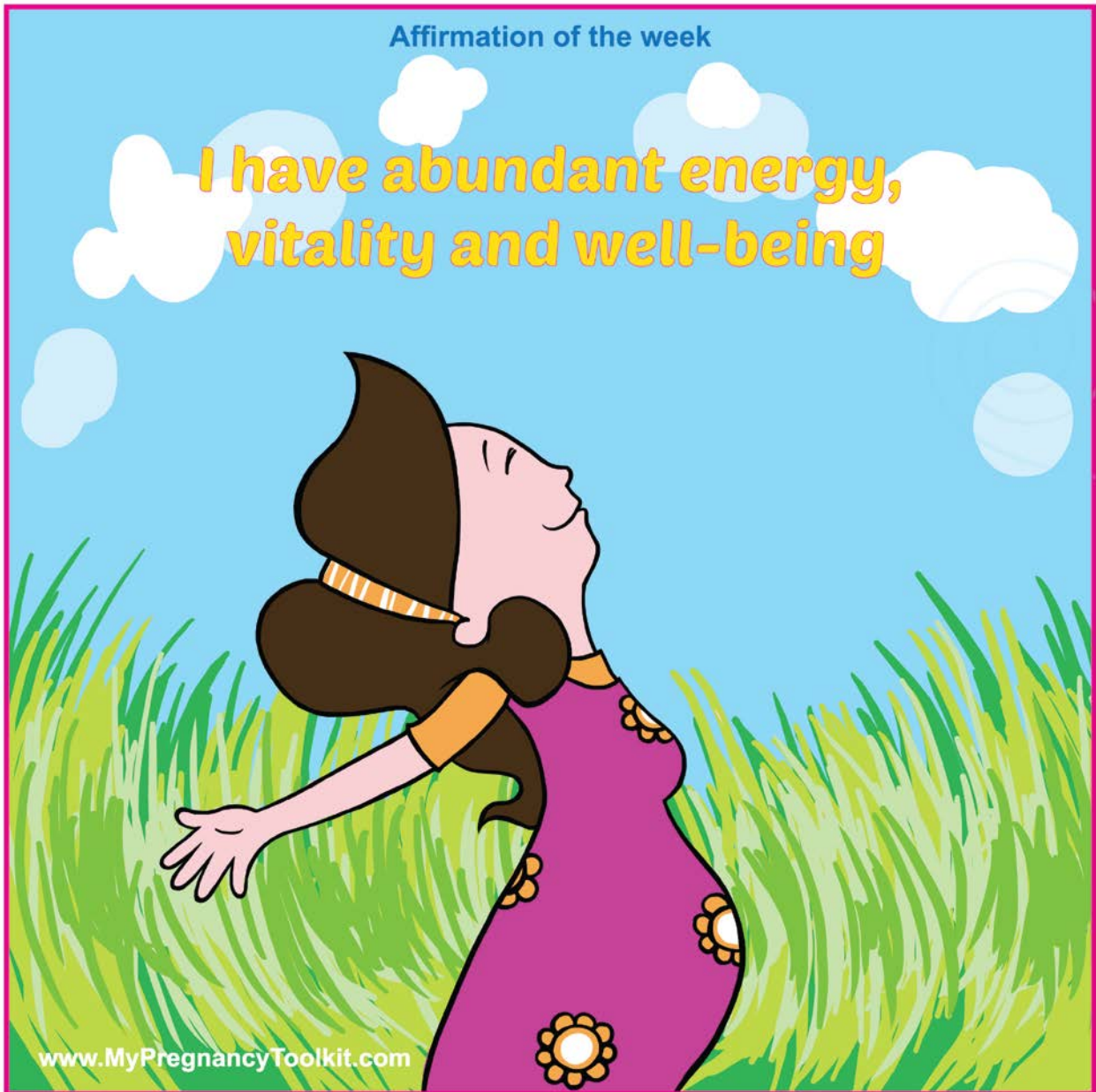
I'm so excited for conception! And while you're getting up close and personal with dad this week, consider, ***"When two hearts beat together, the third one is conceived."***

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 3 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

By now, I've developed into a ball of cells that are dividing and growing like crazy. I'm not an embryo quite yet – I'm actually something called a blastocyst. Once I've made my way down from your fallopian tubes to your uterus, my cells will start producing a hormone called hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin), which is what turns a pregnancy test positive. That's right, by the end of this week, you might be able to tell that I'm here. Of course, not all babies are the same – if you take a test and get a negative result, wait a few days and try again. As you probably know, it's hard work growing into a person. To take one thing off my plate, amniotic fluid is starting to build up around my cells and will eventually become the amniotic sac that cushions and protects me for the next 37 weeks. For now, I'm just busy growing as much as I can, although I'm still really small – about the size of a pen tip.

Even if you haven't taken a pregnancy test, there may be a few really early signs to let you know I've arrived. Some moms experience a bit of spotting, which people think comes from the blastocyst getting nice and cozy while burrowing into the uterine lining. Other moms will start seeing the hallmarks of pregnancy – from tender breasts and fatigue to being turned off by certain foods and a heightened sense of smell. You probably aren't experiencing anything like full-blown morning sickness just yet, but it's entirely possible you've started feeling just a little different, or queasy, at this point.

If you're planning to break out a pregnancy test, make sure you buy one with multiple tests so you can confirm your results. Also, take your test first thing in the morning – it's the most accurate time to check out whether I'm here!

I can't wait for you to discover that you're pregnant with me. As I like to say, ***"A baby fills a place in your heart that you never knew was empty."*** – Anonymous

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week



**I am healthy, happy
and pregnant**

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WEEK 4 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Ta-dah! I'm no longer just a mere ball of cells. You are now the carrier of an embryo, one that has settled into your uterus for a good long rest. Not that I'm not busy, of course. I'm actually busy splitting into two groups – half of which will make me, your baby, and the other half, which will form the placenta. The placenta is what gives me nourishment and oxygen while I'm growing in your belly. And that protective layer called the amniotic sac and fluid is fully formed so I'm nice and cushioned. Despite all this development, I'm still pretty teeny tiny – no bigger than a poppy seed.

Now here's the exciting part. This week you should for sure be able to tell whether you're pregnant. Take a home pregnancy test, and visit your doctor to confirm things. Many prenatal doctors won't see moms-to-be until they're about six-to-eight weeks along, but you can always visit your family doctor for a pregnancy test. If you haven't taken a test just yet, there are some other early signs you're pregnant. A lot of women describe their early symptoms as similar to PMS – mood swings, spotting, cramping, and bloating are all pretty common at this stage. Of course, if you're bleeding with a heavier flow, it's probably a good idea to visit your doctor and get things checked out if you've received a positive pregnancy test.

Once you know you're pregnant, it's time to make a few more changes. You've hopefully already phased out drinking, drugs and alcohol – but what about those medications? Ask your doctor or pharmacist what prescription and over-the-counter drugs are safe to take while pregnant. One pill I do recommend? A prenatal vitamin, ideally one loaded with folic acid to help me avoid neural-tube defects like spina bifida.

You're pregnant, I'm an embryo – life is good. And don't forget, ***"The thing that's nice about pregnancy is that in the end, you have a baby."*** – Ann Romney (Former First Lady of Massachusetts and Mother of Five)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I ask for and receive what I need



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WEEK 5 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Don't be alarmed. If you were to take a look at me right now, I might actually kind of resemble a little tadpole (complete with a tail!) I'm actually about the size of an apple seed at the moment, and still growing every single day. If you're feeling a little extra love this week, that's because my circulatory system and my heart has started to form – and function. That little 'tail' I mentioned? That's actually the start of my neural tube, which is where my brain and spinal cord will eventually develop. Finally even my internal organs – like my lungs and my intestines – are starting to take shape. All of this action is taking place in three very busy layers within the amniotic sac.

As for you, I'm thinking you're probably starting to really notice and feel those telltale pregnancy signs. At this point you've likely missed a period and are doing the math. When combined with symptoms like sore breasts, fatigue and frequent urination, it all adds up to a pregnancy. And yes, you might be feeling a little nauseated at this point, but real morning sickness is still to come.

If you suspect you're pregnant, remember – it's time to give up social activities like drinking. There are lots of ways to avoid questions about your alcohol consumption while also steering clear of liquor. Offer to be the designated driver for your group, order a non-alcoholic cocktail to blend in, or simply avoid occasions where alcohol is going to be the focus. While you're at it – consider some of the other things you're consuming. Cut back on caffeine, sugar, and processed foods and take a closer look at what's on your plate. Whole foods loaded with vitamins are key to a healthy pregnancy for both you and me.

It's hard to believe so much has happened in a little over a month – and we still have 35 weeks to go! If you're ready, keep in mind, ***"A baby will make love stronger, days shorter, nights longer, bankroll smaller, home happier, clothes shabbier, the past forgotten, and the future worth living for."*** - Unknown

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

PREGNANCY IS JOY



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WEEK 6 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hello mom,

Six weeks in, thirty-four to go! Right now, I'm rapidly starting to take shape into the little person you will one day get to love, cuddle and cherish. My nose, mouth and ears are just starting to form and blood is beginning to run through my veins. If you could hear it, my tiny heart is beating almost twice as fast as your own, and I'm already moving a bit. Don't worry though; you probably can't feel a thing just yet. Despite all this action, I'm actually just the size of a tiny lentil and no longer than a small nail. All those other developments I talked about last week – like my brain, lungs and internal organs – are still chugging along.

Even if you can't feel me, I'm sure you can feel the other changes in your body. Because I'm growing so fast, I know you might be struggling with mood swings, morning sickness, fatigue, tender breasts, and crazy food cravings. Let me say now, it will all be worth it one day. At this point you might be starting to gain weight as well, which is totally normal. A lot of women lose weight in the early weeks of their pregnancy (thanks, morning sickness) but by the end of your first trimester, it's not uncommon to have gained about five pounds - and we're halfway there already.

And mom, I know you're excited and everything, but don't forget to take care of yourself. Get plenty of rest, and think about creating a light exercise routine that'll help you stay healthy while I'm growing. There are plenty of prenatal exercise activities like swimming and yoga that are fun, beneficial and safe. You can also just try some light exercise like taking a walk around the neighborhood.

At this point, people might start noticing that little pregnancy glow special moms like you get. You want to know why? ***"If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely."*** – Roald Dahl (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I know how to take care of myself during pregnancy



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WEEK 7 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hi there mom,

What grows 10,000 times its size in just over a month? That'd be me. I'm now about the size of a blueberry, and my head is growing big time – I've got to get that mighty brain of mine working after all. Meanwhile, my mouth, tongue, hands, arms, legs and feet are all forming. Before you know it, I'll be sticking out my tongue and running away from you (okay, maybe not – we've got at least a year or two to go before that happens). Those facial features that started forming last week are even more realized. My eyelids are starting to take shape, my eyes are getting a bit of color, and my nose is starting to bud. My liver, pancreas and appendix are also beginning to grow.

Meanwhile, don't look now...but I'm pretty sure your breasts have grown over the last little bit. Many moms-to-be report going up an entire cup size or two during their pregnancy, which might be kind of awesome, if only your breasts weren't so darn tender. If you're wondering why they're all kinds of sensitive, it's because while I'm busy growing in your tummy, your breasts are undergoing some changes of their own as they become primed to become milk factories for breastfeeding. It's a big responsibility, and your body's kicking things into high gear now so you'll be ready. Other things that have increased this week? Your need to hit the bathroom – whether for peeing or vomiting (sorry!) Morning sickness is typically in full swing by week 7, although you can expect to find relief in a few weeks time, usually no later than week 14. As for the urinating? That's the result of extra blood volume and the need to process more fluids through your kidneys.

Typically it's about this time that you'll pay or plan a visit to your prenatal doctor. Before you go, sit down and think about or write down all of the questions you'd like to ask. Nothing is too silly or strange. And remember, your doctor's advice is way better than anything you'll find on the Internet. Also, be prepared to share a full medical history. If you can, ask your parents (and my dad's parents) about any history of pregnancy complications or genetic diseases. The more your doctor knows, the better they'll be able to watch for warning signs of possible issues.

Things are getting exciting! I love the idea that, ***["Of all the rights of women, the greatest is to be a mother."](#)*** – Lin Yutang (Chinese Writer)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I embrace
my strength

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WEEK 8 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

I've got fingers! And toes! Plus, that tail I grew in week 4 is just about gone as my body catches up to the development of my spine. I'm still growing like crazy – about a mm every day – and that protective layer of amniotic fluid is growing right alongside me, with about 2 additional tablespoons per week. Forgive me, but I don't quite have control of my arms and legs just yet. I'm actually flailing them around a fair bit, but chances are you won't feel that. In other words, you've got a big raspberry jiggling around your belly. But hey, before you pick out my name, I'm still not a 'he' or a 'she' just yet, aside from my genetic makeup.

At this point, you might feel start to see some subtle signs of your pregnancy in the mirror. Your breasts are probably getting bigger and your pants might be feeling a little snug. It's all part of the pregnancy process. Luckily, I've got some good news to counter the bad news that you're probably dealing with some not-so-fun morning sickness right now. The good news is, even if you're spending way more time than you'd like in the bathroom, morning sickness is actually a good sign that your pregnancy is going well.

If that's not enough to ease your nausea, there are a few strategies for combatting that constant queasy feeling. For one thing – don't skip meals! If you don't eat, your stomach acids will start to churn which can actually make morning sickness worse. If the idea of eating a big breakfast turns your stomach, consider being a constant grazer throughout the day. Small meals are easier to digest, plus you can avoid wasting food when you pick and choose exactly what you want to eat. If just the smell, sight, or thought of something is making you nauseated – skip it. Stick to whatever works, even if it's repetitive. Of course, don't forget to eat healthy. If vegetables are turning you off, consider a sweet piece of fruit. Nearly every veggie has a fruity counterpart to help you get the nutrients we both need.

Can you believe it's been two months already? Pretty groovy. Before I sign off, I just wanted to remind you that ***"To be pregnant is to be vitally alive, thoroughly woman, and undoubtedly inhabited."*** – Anne Buchanan & Debra Klingsporn (Authors)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I CAN HANDLE WHATEVER COMES UP



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WEEK 9 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Here we go, month three. At this point, I'm about the size of a grape or an olive. Despite my little size, I'm actually starting to look pretty human. My eyelids are done forming and they're doing a good job staying sealed over my eyes (as they will for the next 27 weeks). The rest of my facial features are coming along – you can start to make out my ears, mouth, nose, and nostrils. Even the tiniest little pinpricks of teeth are starting to appear. All those organs and nerves that have been forming in the first couple of months are getting ready to start working, and although you wouldn't be able to tell on an ultrasound whether I'm male or female, my genitalia have also started to develop. Most importantly, this week the placenta is fully operational and will take care of producing hormones.

The placenta is completely critical to my well-being, and your body is working pretty darn hard to make sure it's operational. As a result, don't be surprised if you feel pretty exhausted right about now – pregnancy fatigue is completely normal. Once the critical development of the placenta is finished (in a few weeks time) you can expect your energy levels to perk back up as well. You're also probably feeling a little emotional at the moment. Many moms report that weeks 6 to 10 have some serious mood swing action happening, so try not to get too worked up if you're feeling particularly anxious one minute and doing a happy dance the next. Your emotions will likely rebalance themselves once we hit the second trimester.

My tip of the week? Sit down with your partner and talk about genetic screening. If you have a high risk of birth defects or other challenges (particularly if you're over the age of 35) it might be worth it to sit down with a doctor and discuss your options. There are some risks to prenatal screening, but sometimes the benefits and possible peace-of-mind are worth it. Most screening is done between weeks 10 and 12, so now's the time to chat and figure things out.

As much as work as it is to be pregnant, don't forget – ***"A baby is something you carry inside you for nine months, in your arms for three years and in your heart till the day you die."*** – Mary Mason (Musician)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I AM IN TUNE WITH MY
BODY AND MY BABY**



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WEEK 10 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Now that most of my early development is complete, it's time for some rapid growth. At this point, interesting little features have begun to appear, like fingernails and a soft peach fuzz of hair growing on my skin. Many of my vital organs are not only in place, they're actually functioning. I've even started producing my own red blood cells. My arms and legs now have distinct hands and toes, and my limbs can actually bend and flex a bit – I'm actually testing things out by kicking this week, although don't expect to feel any little punts against your tummy just yet. I'm also swallowing fluid to help me grow big and strong. Despite all this, I'm still just the size of a prune. The coolest thing right now? You should be able to hear my heartbeat using a Doppler stethoscope at your next prenatal visit. It'll be super fast and super light, but I can't wait for you to hear it and know that I'm doing well.

At this stage your pregnancy may begin to 'show', possibly just a bit. At the very least, chances are your clothes are starting to strain, especially your bra. Many women have noted that week 10 is when they begin straddling a line between maternity wear and their regular clothing. Some of this is due to your expanding belly, but it can also be related to bloating and constipation – both common side effects of being pregnant. Combat them both by drinking plenty of water, avoiding high-sodium foods and choosing healthy fruits and vegetables. The good news is, lots of women report their energy is starting to perk back up around this point, and your morning sickness might be starting to level off.

If you're looking at your wardrobe and wondering whether it's time to spring for some maternity jeans, there are a few ways to extend your clothes in the early stages of pregnancy. If you've got elastic-banded pants or skirts, haul those out for a more forgiving fit around your waistline. Dresses and tops with an empire or natural waist are a good way to disguise a growing midsection, or you can wear leggings and tunics for a trendy-yet-comfortable look. There are also products out there that can insert into your favorite jeans to give you a bit of extra breathing (and growing) room without tipping off the masses that you're preggers.

Still thinking about hearing my heartbeat? It's just the first of many milestones you'll get to experience outside the womb. ***"A mother's joy begins when new life is stirring inside, when a tiny heartbeat is heard for the first time, and a playful kick reminds her that she is never alone."*** – Unknown

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**MY BREATHING IS EASY,
DEEP, AND FULL**



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WEEK 11 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Good news – we’re in the home stretch of your first trimester, meaning the odds of a miscarriage are about to drop significantly. I’m about 2 inches big now, or about the size of a small lime. This week, I’ve taken to wiggling my newly separated fingers and toes around, almost like I’m doing ballet in your belly. Some of my other features are looking more and more defined as well – I’ve got nostrils, ears, nipples, and even a tongue. At this point, all of that essential development has hopefully gone to plan and from here on out, my job is to just keep on getting bigger and stronger until I’m ready to say hello to the world.

During this week, if you spot a dark line on your abdomen – don’t panic! It’s something called linea nigra, and about 75% of women get it during their pregnancy. Some studies have indicated it’s a sign of not getting enough folic acid, in which case, make sure you’re gobbling up dark, leafy vegetables and taking supplements if you haven’t been already. And if you’re not a fan of the stripe, no worries; it typically disappears within a few months of my arrival.

Speaking of diet, hopefully you’ve been eating well. You already know to cut back on caffeine and skip alcohol altogether, but what about those other foods people say you should avoid during pregnancy? A lot of people will tell you to avoid fish. The reason? Some seafood contains high levels of methylmercury, which can hurt my developing brain. That being said, fish also contains healthy omega-3 fatty acids which are great for my eyesight and nervous system. The trick is to avoid certain types of fish – like tuna, shark and swordfish – and always make sure it’s cooked. Raw fish can contain harmful parasites and bacteria that could make both you and me sick. For the same reasons, you’ll want to avoid soft (unpasteurized) cheeses, raw or undercooked meats, and foods with raw eggs (like Caesar salad or cookie batter).

After all that water ballet, I’m feeling kind of poetic this week. So with that, ***[“All the time we wondered and wondered, who is this person coming / growing / turning / floating / swimming deep, deep inside me.”](#)*** – Crescent Dragonwagon (Poet)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I desire foods that nourish me and
support my health



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WEEK 12 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Dearest mom,

Check out my reflexes in action! Well, actually – you won't be able to feel anything, but I definitely can. If you poke your belly, I'll move in response. In the meantime, I'm also busy flexing my fingers and toes, clenching my eye muscles, and even practicing for breastfeeding by making sucking movements with my mouth. If you could see me, you'd also see that despite being about the size of a plum, my face is looking more and more like yours (and dad's) by the day. My eyes have moved closer together and my ears are in the right spot. More of my organs are also starting to function – my bone marrow is making white blood cells, my kidneys have started filtering urine into my bladder, and my liver is creating bile. Not the most pleasant-sounding developments, but every step counts toward making your fully-grown, healthy baby.

As we come to the end of the first trimester, you should be feeling less nauseated. Morning sickness should be tapering off around now, as well as some of the other early signs of pregnancy. That being said, some new symptoms may have popped up. If you're feeling a little dizzy or lightheaded, that's my fault (sort of). See, right now I need some extra blood flow from you to help my growth. Your body releases a hormone called progesterone to help me out, but it also restricts your blood flow a bit. Combined with typically lower blood sugar levels during pregnancy, don't be surprised if you get a little loopy here and there. Just take it easy – get plenty of rest, eat well, and stand up slowly.

Remember, once you're into your second trimester, the chances of miscarrying go down substantially. With about 28 weeks to go, it might be time to sit down and start planning for my arrival. If you're going on maternity leave, your household budgets will likely have to change. Consider making a post-baby budget to outline your regular expenses, plus all the new ones that come along with having a little one in your home. Don't forget about how my arrival will impact your regular bills – an extra person means extra water, light, and heat, plus you can expect your grocery bills to go up as you stock up on diapers, food, and other baby essentials.

As we round the corner toward the third trimester, here's a lovely thought for you from another mom: ***"Before you were conceived I wanted you. Before you were born I loved you. Before you were here an hour I would die for you. This is the miracle of Mother's Love."*** – Maureen Hawkins (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

My body is completely relaxed



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WEEK 13 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

This is it. The final week of your first trimester. Right about now, I've got a pretty giant head – it's actually about a third of my entire body length. By the time I'm born, it'll even out to be about just a quarter of my size. That head is home to a set of developing teeth, and below that, my vocal chords are forming so I can let out those middle-of-the-night screams, and eventually, say 'I love you'. I'm now about three inches long and roughly the size of a peach. Believe it or not, if I'm a girl, millions of eggs are forming in my ovaries so that one day I might be able to have a baby of my own. Also cool? My arm and leg bones are starting to form along with my fingerprints, and I'm more than a little tempted to start sucking on my thumb.

So look, promise you won't talk to me about this when I'm actually out in the world...but are you feeling a little frisky right now? Lots of women report an increase in their sex drives around this time – and many dads aren't far behind. What can I say? That healthy pregnancy glow plus a cocktail of hormones can be simply irresistible. It is safe to have sex when you're pregnant, so don't worry if you're looking to have some fun. Speaking of what's going on 'down there', you may start to notice a milky vaginal discharge around this time, known as leukorrhea. It's a special yet harmless discharge that actually prevents bacteria and infections in the birth canal, and it'll only increase in the coming weeks. Try panty liners to minimize the mess.

As you round the corner into the second trimester, a lot of those early day symptoms – like fatigue, nausea, and frequent urination – should start to taper off. With your mind more clear, you're probably going to start having a million questions about me. While your doctor is always a great resource, why not talk to friends or family members that have also gone through pregnancy? Every woman's pregnancy experience is unique, and sharing your fears, doubts, and questions with another person can be a great way to relieve tension and get perspective. You can even look online at pregnancy or mom blogs, or join a community of women with similar due dates so you can share your individual stories.

I know it's a lot of work carrying me, so I thought I should say thank you right here and now. Whatever you're feeling right now, it's okay to think about me, ***"No one else will ever know the strength of my love for you. After all, you're the only one who knows what my heart sounds like from the inside."*** – Anonymous

Love,

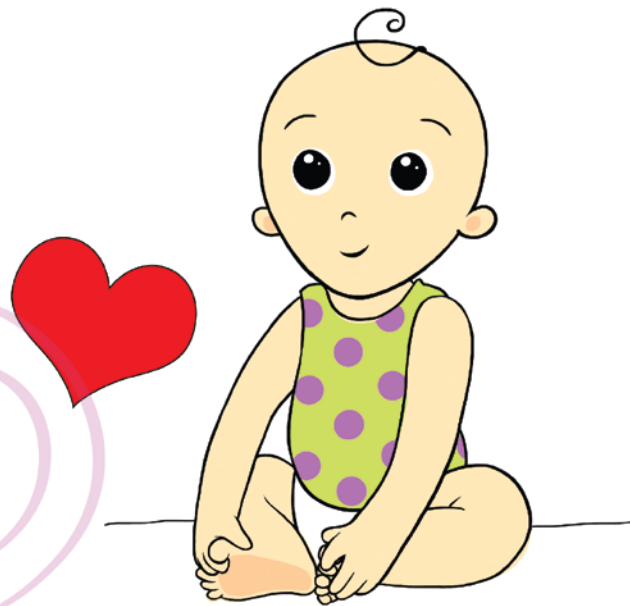
Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I love my baby



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WEEK 14 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hiya mom,

Here we are, officially into the second trimester. I'm now the size of a lemon and my nervous system is taking things up a notch. I can now make a few faces – frowning, grimacing, and squinting – produce urine and pee, and suck my thumb on a regular basis. I'm also starting to stretch out a bit. My arms and torso are catching up with my still quite-large head, although my legs have a way to go. Although I'm too tiny for you to feel it, I love wiggling my hands and feet. Also, while I appreciate how nice and warm it is in your tummy, I've grown soft, downy hair all over my body (called lanugo) to keep me extra toasty. Of course, once you bring me into the world, I'll pile on the baby fat and that hair will shed pretty quickly. But just know I'm warm and comfortable in the meantime.

The start of the second trimester is really a good news story. Your energy levels should be back up, while tenderness in your breasts and morning sickness should be dropping off. Don't be surprised if your baby bump starts to show a bit more around this time either. As your uterus expands above your pubic bone, it'll start to pop and become more visible. Meanwhile, the muscles and ligaments that are supporting your growing uterus may give you a few cramps around your belly. Try a hot water bottle to naturally and gently soothe away those pregnancy aches.

It's decision time again. Once you round the three-month mark, many moms consider this the appropriate time to share your big news (although chances are you've already spilled the beans to your closest family and friends before this). There are many memorable and fun ways to spread the word – like posting a photo of your bump online, gifting my grandparents-to-be with a pair of baby shoes, or creating a riddle for your loved ones to solve. But one of the most stressful and delicate reveals for many women is with their workplaces.

Some women will wait until they're very clearly showing, others will share the news as soon as it's confirmed. If you're having complications or extreme symptoms, it's a good idea to tell your employer so they can be sympathetic to your health. If you're unsure how your workplace will handle the news, consider reaching out to a close coworker for advice, particularly if they've

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also gone through the process. Remember: the earlier you tell your coworkers, the more time it gives them to prepare for your maternity leave.

I'm sure you got a lot on your mind this week, but you're not alone. Check out this quote from another mom, ***"Everything grows rounder and wider and weirder, and I sit here in middle of it all and wonder who in the world you will turn out to be."*** – Carrie Fisher (Actress)

Love,

PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

My possibilities
are endless



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WEEK 15 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

I'm still growing like crazy. In the last week, I've expanded to about the size of an apple or an orange (two healthy fruits you should be munching on, by the way). I've started working on my respiratory system by moving amniotic fluid through my nose and lungs, to help in the development of what will eventually become my air sacs. My legs are finally getting longer than my arms, and I'm still busy moving my limbs and joints around. Although my eyelids are fused shut, I can also sense light – if you put a flashlight up to your belly, I'd probably turn away from it.

I know last week I was really positive with the news that your first trimester symptoms were leveling off. But this week, I've got to warn you – all that progesterone in your body might be causing inflammation in your mouth and your nose. Many pregnant women get sore or bleeding gums, and have more plaque build-up on their teeth. Brush often and visit your dentist for extra help and advice. Your nasal cavity might also be suffering. If you've got a stuffed-up nose or nosebleeds, you're not alone. The increased blood flow to your mucous membranes and blood vessel expansion in your nose are the culprits. Unfortunately there isn't much you can do to relieve these symptoms, but talk to your doctor about safe medications if things are really uncomfortable.

Finally, you should be able to possibly find out if I'm a boy or a girl, marking yet another decision for parents-to-be. A word of caution: many times it can be difficult to determine my sex – don't be surprised if I'm curled up and hide my genitals during your ultrasound. Keep in mind that some healthcare facilities may refuse to tell you the gender because they don't want to be liable for an inaccurate result. Of course, if your ultrasound technician gives you the opportunity to find out, make sure you're prepared with an answer. There are advantages to both finding out and leaving it as a surprise. Some moms report that knowing if they're having a boy or girl gives them an extra bond with their baby, while others simply find peace-of-mind in being able to plan décor and clothing purchases. Of course, ultrasounds aren't always 100% accurate, so keep that in mind when you're splurging on a frilly dress or sports jersey. If you decide to leave it a surprise, there's nothing wrong with that either. You won't be

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'disappointed' if the ultrasound turns out to be incorrect, and excitement about finding out the sex of your baby can be motivation during the hardest moments of giving birth.

I know you've got a lot on your mind and maybe a few more aches and pains than usual, but think of the reward at the end; *"I begin to love this creature, and to anticipate her birth as a fresh twist to a knot, which I do not wish to untie."* – Mary Wollstonecraft (Writer & Philosopher)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I am surrounded by those
who love and respect me**



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WEEK 16 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Believe it or not, as of this week, I'm listening! My ears are almost in their final position on my head, and I can start to detect the sound of your voice (plus others that are leaning down to say hello to your belly). My legs are still growing while my back is straightening out, and I'm even growing toenails to go with my fingernails. Although I'm still pretty small – about the size of an avocado – over the next few weeks I'm actually going to double in size and length. As I grow, so will the amount of blood I pump. Right now I'm producing about 25 quarts per day!

Although you're likely settling into pregnancy and feeling pretty good around this time, you'll also probably have gained a noticeable amount of weight. A lot of women have questions about how much they 'should' be gaining and how much they 'should' be eating. The truth is, it's different – like many things with pregnancy – for every woman. During the first trimester, you'll probably have gained somewhere between 5 and 10 pounds. Over the next few weeks, you should aim to gain an additional 12 to 14 pounds. And don't fret – that weight is healthy and necessary for my development. As long as you're gaining weight by eating healthy, nutrient-rich food, all's good.

Still worried about that extra pregnancy weight? Here's a few ideas to help keep your body on track. First of all, you probably only need to munch on about 300 extra calories per day to keep me healthy and growing. Try writing down what you eat each day, and see if there are any junk foods or wasted calories you could swap out for healthier choices. Do not skip meals or go on a low-calorie diet – just aim for more nutrient-rich foods in your meals. If you didn't start on a fitness regime earlier on in your pregnancy, consider picking one up now. Light or moderate exercise – even something as simple as taking a walk around the neighborhood – can help manage your weight gain while also making you feel great.

Mom, seriously don't worry about that weight. ***“Feeling fat lasts nine months, but the joy of becoming a mom lasts forever.”*** – Nikki Dalton (Artist)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I am aware of my balanced,
calm pregnancy



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WEEK 17 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

If you could take me out of your womb right now, I'd actually fit into your palm. I'm about the size of an onion or turnip, but when you realize we're less than halfway through the pregnancy process, I'd say that's pretty impressive, wouldn't you? This week it's all about getting stronger. My cartilage is turning into sturdy bones, I'm building up fat around my skeleton, and my umbilical cord – which ties me to my life support, the placenta – is getting thicker. I'm also getting prepped for surviving in the real world; practicing sucking and breathing every chance I get.

As your bump grows more noticeable, two things will probably start to happen. First of all, people will probably demand to touch or rub your belly. If you're comfortable with it, there's nothing wrong with letting people say a friendly hello to me – but never feel obligated to let someone touch your body just because you're pregnant. Secondly, don't be surprised if you start feeling a little off-balance. A newly rounded tummy can throw off your center of gravity. Get up slowly when you've been sitting or lying down for awhile, and consider swapping out those stilettos for flats – lower shoes make it easier for you to strut your stuff.

Is your nose still bothering you? Like I talked about in Week 15, many pregnant women find their sinuses act up – triggering allergic reactions, nosebleeds, and snoring. If you sound like a buzz saw overnight, it might be time to look into some snoring remedies. Drink a cup of peppermint tea to clear your sinuses, paste on one of those nose strips to open up your nasal passages, or try sleeping on a few stacked pillows. If nothing's working, it's time for you – or my dad – to relocate so you both get a good night's rest while you still can.

These days it's all about changes – and you haven't even welcomed me to the world just yet. With that in mind, ***“Whether your pregnancy was meticulously planned, medically coaxed, or happened by surprised, one thing is certain; your life will never be the same.”*** – Catherine Jones (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I AM A STRONG WOMAN



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WEEK 18 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

I'm getting ready for some action this week, and pretty soon, you'll be able to feel it. Right now, I'm about the size of a sweet potato. With my limbs and joints in place, I'm having a blast kicking, punching, flexing, twisting and rolling. I'm also hiccupping and yawning – which you'll also be able to feel soon enough. Did I mention my toe and fingerprints are now complete (and totally unique to me)? If you're having a girl, this week my uterus and fallopian tubes will also in place. If you're having a boy, my genitals should be easier to spot during your ultrasound, but don't be surprised if I still hide them from you.

Now that your morning sickness has (hopefully) disappeared, by this point your appetite may have come roaring back. Just remember – try and eat healthy (fruits, vegetables, whole grains) when you can and skip the junk (chips, fried foods, candy). Although you want to gain weight during pregnancy, the kind you gain from junk food is the kind that'll be harder to lose once I'm born. Are you feeling a little achy right now? Try lying down and sleeping on your side. Lying on your back can decrease blood flow through your body, as your expanding uterus can put the squeeze on a major vein in your body. The other major culprit of aches and pains is those ever-pesky hormones. This time around, they're trying loosen up your joints in prep for birth; which can send your muscles and ligaments for a loop. Take a nice, relaxing bath and clear your mind while soothing away those pains.

The same hormone that's relaxing your muscles is also relaxing the stomach valve that keeps acid out of your esophagus. In addition, your expanding uterus is pushing around your stomach. As a result, many women suffer from heartburn during pregnancy – in fact, it's said that the more hair your baby has, the stronger your heartburn might be. In general, as a younger woman, you've probably never experienced it before. The good news is there are a few things you can do to combat heartburn. For one, go back to those small meals you were eating when morning sickness was rocking your body. Eat them slowly, and try sipping a glass of water while you're eating. Keep the stomach acid at bay by standing or taking a walk after dinner – lying down will only make it easier for your body to start churning up that acid. Finally, watch what you eat. Spicy or greasy foods are more likely to cause heartburn. Your best bet is to avoid them while pregnant.

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Did I ever tell you how proud I am of you? You're doing great – we're almost halfway through our 40 weeks together. ***"No language can express the power and beauty and heroism of a mother's love."*** – Edwin H. Chapin (Preacher and Poet)

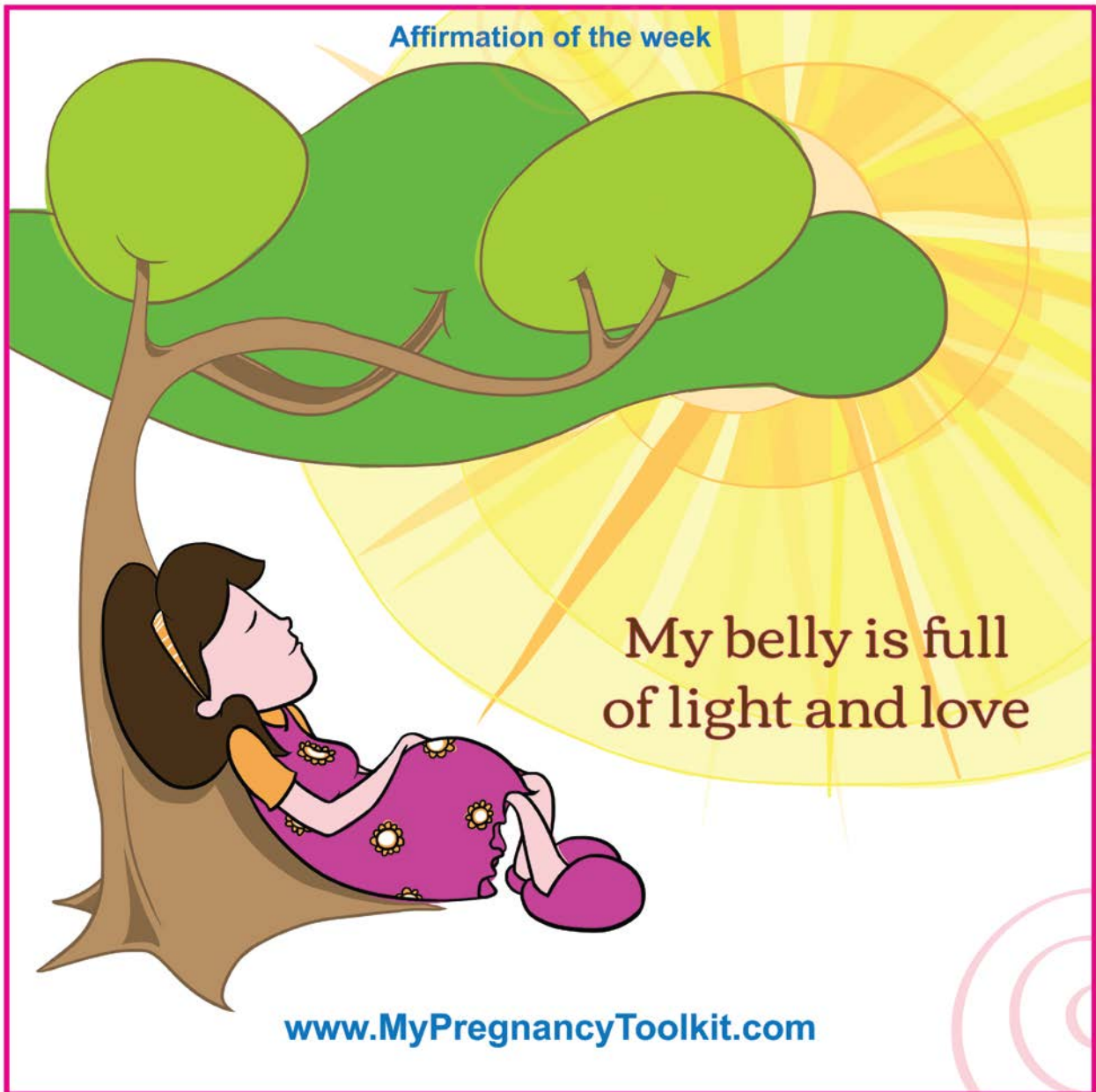
Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 19 – FIRST TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

You know how when you sit in a bath or the ocean for too long, and your skin gets all pruneey? Imagine spending nine months in amniotic fluid! That's why your body is busy producing a waxy white substance called vernix caseosa to coat my skin and protect it from all that liquid. Don't worry, I shed it before I'm born – although a few babies, especially premature ones, might have a bit left on their skin when they make their debut. This week, I'm starting to shape up as well – my legs and arms are finally the right proportion to my body, they've just got to keep on getting bigger. I've grown to the size of a mango, but we've still got a ways to go, you and me.

Remember way back in Week 11, when I mentioned linea nigra, a dark line that may have appeared below your belly button? Don't be surprised if more dark spots pop up around different parts of your body, thanks to a temporary increase in pigment. If you're self-conscious about your marks, they can usually be covered up with makeup and they will fade over time. If you're pregnant during the sunny summer months, cover up! Exposure to the sun will increase the likelihood and prevalence of your spots. In addition, a boost in estrogen production may mean your palms are a darker shade of red. And if you're feeling some tingling and numbness in your fingers and toes, that's the result of expanding tissues pressing up against your nerve endings.

We're almost at the halfway point! Whether you know my sex or not, it might be a good time to start jotting down names and discussing them with my dad to see what you love (and disagree on). There are so many things to consider – from meanings and family history to the way it sounds with my last name and famous namesakes. Start early so you don't feel rushed or uncertain when I finally arrive in the world, but don't feel pressured to name me what you picked out before. A lot of parents meet their baby and realize their first choice of name doesn't quite fit – it's always good to have back-ups just in case.

If you're thinking about your family's heritage when considering my name, check out this fun quote, ***"Life is a flame that is always burning itself out, but it catches fire again every time a child is born."*** – George Bernard Shaw (Playwright)

Love,

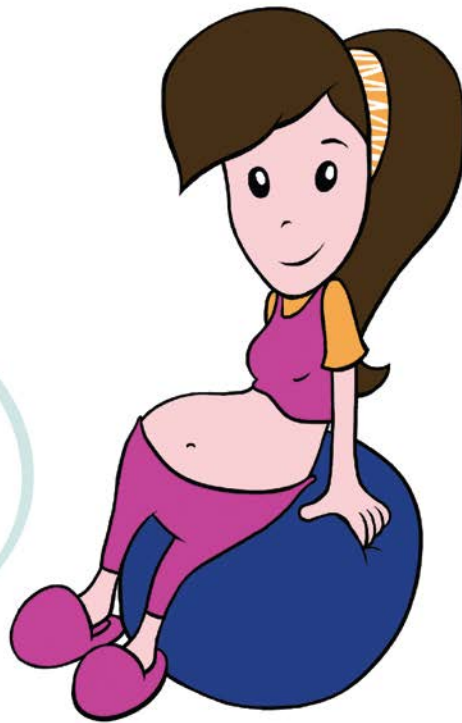
Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I COOPERATE WITH MY
BODY AND MY BABY**



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WEEK 20 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

Is that a banana in your belly, or are you just happy to be growing a baby? That's right, I've started lengthening out this week – I'm about 10 inches long now. Developments are still happening fast and furious; my genitalia are basically fully formed, meaning it should be even easier to track down whether I'm a boy or girl at your ultrasound appointment (if you want to know, that is). This week I've also started producing meconium: a gooey, black substance that's the result of getting my digestive system going when I swallow amniotic fluid (along with digestive secretions and dead cells). You'll eventually see the meconium when use my diaper for the first time, although some babies also get rid of it while passing through the womb during delivery.

20 weeks in means you're halfway through 40 weeks of pregnancy. At this point you've probably gained about 10 pounds, and you can expect to gain another pound each week. That healthy pregnancy glow is probably in full swing at this point as well – many women report thicker, lusher hair and stronger nails thanks to all those baby hormones floating around your body. If however, you're spotting hair in unwanted places, feel free to pluck away – those hairs are temporary, but there's no need to rock a chin goatee when you're pregnant.

Because I'm getting bigger, you should start to feel that water ballet I'm doing in your belly...but if you can't, don't panic! Many women report feeling those first flutters and punches around weeks 18 to 22, but there are many reasons why you might not be able to. If you're on the thinner side of things or if you've already had a child, you'll be more likely to sense those kicks and jabs. If I'm positioned in a way that has me facing inwards, it's simply harder to detect when I'm practicing my future soccer goal scoring techniques. Finally, you might simply have an inaccurate due date, meaning you're actually behind the times and not quite there in terms of feeling me move around. No matter what, you will feel me in due time, so don't worry.

Now that we're at the halfway point, I'm sure you're starting to count down to my arrival already. Keep in mind, ***"Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship fall. A mother's secret hope outlives them all."*** – Oliver Wendell Holmes (Physician)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 21 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Those tacos you had for dinner sure were tasty – that’s right, my taste buds are formed and they can tell what you were eating as of this week. When I’m swallowing that amniotic fluid, I’m also getting a taste of what you’re munching on, and studies have shown I might grow up to like particular foods because of it. So if you want me to be an extra healthy eater, it’s not a bad idea to start early – as in, before I’m out of the womb – and encourage me to eat those carrots and broccoli. All of that hearty ‘eating’ is still helping me grow. I’m now almost a pound and about as long as a carrot. And if you haven’t experienced it yet, don’t be surprised if you start feeling me practice my ninja moves by kicking and squirming around your tummy. In fact, you might even be able to detect some patterns: certain times of day or certain actions might trigger a flurry of kicks and punches.

Now let’s talk about you and the visible changes your body might be going through. As your breasts and belly expand, so does your skin – which may cause red, pink, or purple streaks to appear as the supporting tissue surrounding these growing parts tears. Whether or not you’re sporting some new stripes, you may notice some varicose or spider veins popping up on your legs, ankles, or face. This is a result of the hormone progesterone, which tends to loosen up the walls of your veins (which are also being pushed on thanks to pregnancy-related pressures). You’re more likely to get varicose veins if you’re older or have a family history of them: sleep on your side, wear supportive pantyhose, and exercise daily to help minimize their likelihood. As for spider veins, don’t worry – they often go away once I’ve entered the world and you’re done being pregnant.

My big tip of the week? Now that I can taste (and develop a taste for) the foods you’re eating, it might be time to start taking a closer look at the nutritional benefits of what’s on your plate. Iron is a must-have ingredient to help me grow mighty and strong, and to help your body produce hemoglobin. This red blood cell protein carries oxygen to me, and works hard to keep up with your body’s expanding needs. Red or dark meat can be helpful in building up your iron intake, but if you’re looking for non-meat options try legumes, soy, spinach, or raisins. Multi-vitamins are also a great way to keep your body performing optimally.

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Congrats on jumping into the second half of your pregnancy mom. And if you're fretting about those stretch marks, think of this: ***"Your body is not ruined, you're a goddamn tiger who earned her stripes."*** – Unknown

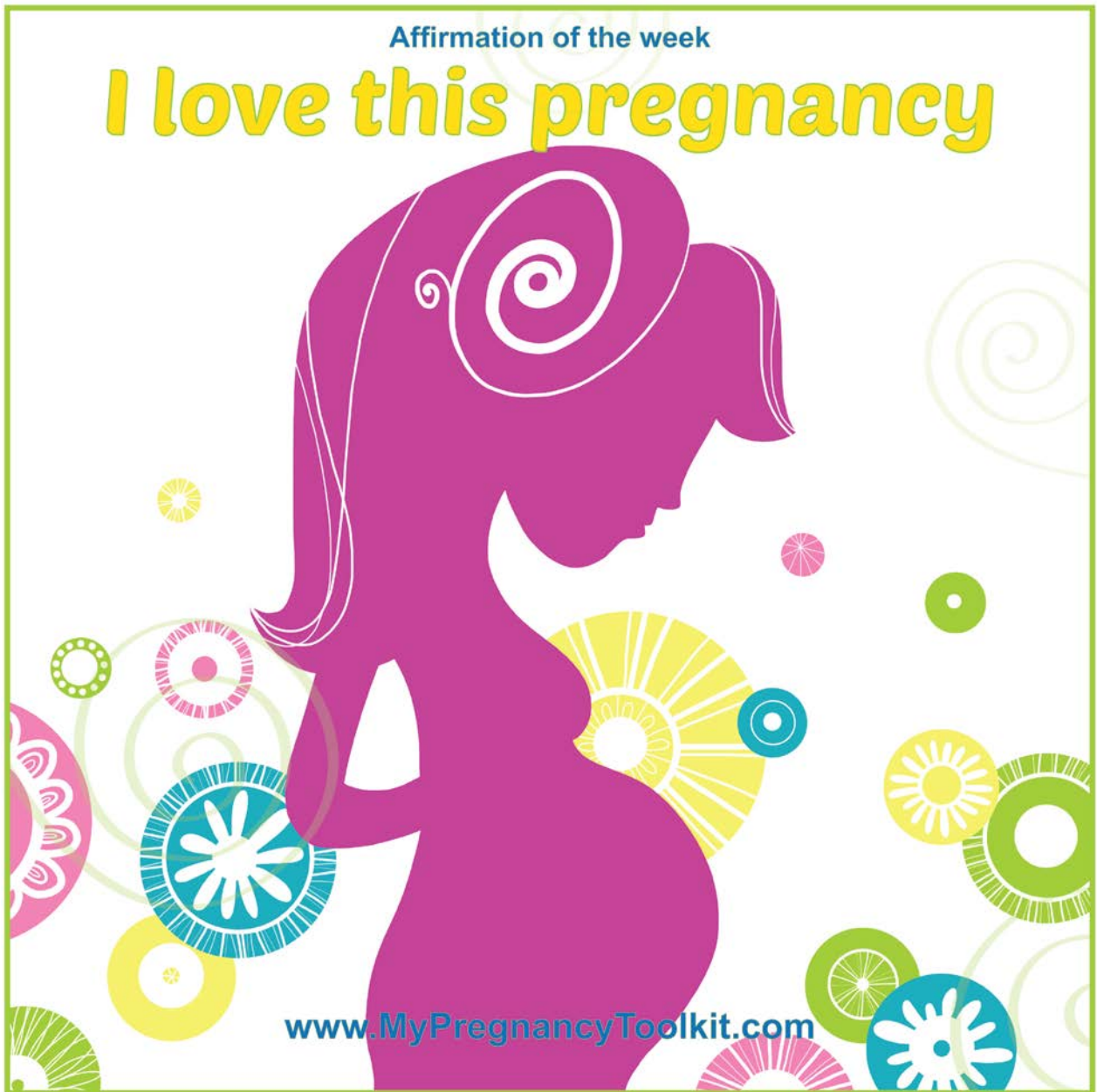
Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 22 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

My senses are starting to kick in as my nervous system develops. With my sense of taste and sound in place, I'm also starting to take note of when it's light and dark. Of course, that doesn't mean my schedule will necessarily sync up with yours – don't be surprised to feel your spaghetti squash-sized baby-to-be tumbling around at night, although I am getting in about 12 to 14 hours of rest per day. I'm also experimenting with my sense of touch; reaching out for my face, or whatever else might be within reach. Speaking of my face, it's coming along nicely. My eyebrows, eyelashes, and even some hair are in place and I'm starting to look just like a tiny newborn (and a little bit more like you and dad).

So far your midsection, breasts, and of course my home, the uterus, have all taken their turns expanding. Now it's time for your feet and ankles to get in on the act. Yet another hormone is to blame for this one: the appropriately named Relaxin, which loosens the pelvic ligaments you'll need to be all bendy for my delivery. Relaxin also frees up just about every other ligament in your body, including the ones in your feet. When combined with slowed-down blood delivery, the bones in your feet will start to expand, meaning you could go up by as much as a whole shoe size when all is said and done. If that's the case, no worries: flatter shoes can help you with an increasingly off-balance center of gravity. Swap out those narrow heels for sandals, sneakers, or boots with a bit of stretch in them.

Whether I'm your first or fifth or fifteenth child, you're probably thinking about throwing a baby shower to help prepare your home for my arrival. If a friend or family member has volunteered to throw you a shower, think about whether you'd like it before my birth (so you've got everything at the ready) or after (so people can meet me and you can ensure my gender). Also, don't be afraid to craft a baby registry. It's a great way to ensure you get the things you need and want, without duplications. It's okay if you ask for some bigger items as well; shower guests and family members love to team up and indulge in a fancy blanket set or high chair when called for. Just don't bank on getting everything you need through the shower – make sure your essentials are covered (clothes, crib, transportation) – and simply enjoy the perks of being a mom-to-be during your shower.

Even if you're feeling a little more cumbersome and bulkier than usual, know that your body is actually doing amazing things. ***"I think that carrying a baby inside you is like running as fast as you can. It feels like finally letting go and filling yourself up to the wildest limits."*** – Unknown

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 23 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Despite the fact I'm not even born, I've had deep wrinkles up to this point – ones I'll still have for awhile after I've arrived. In fact, my skin is so translucent right now you would actually be able to see my bones and organs if I were out of the womb. The good news is, I won't be quite as scary-looking as I'm starting to gain some much-needed baby fat to help plump me up and keep me warm. By the end of this month, I'll actually be double the weight I am right now, so don't be afraid if you find yourself gaining weight a bit more quickly than usual. The more I grow, the more you grow. Speaking of getting bigger, this week I'm about the size of a hearty grapefruit. I'm also more in tune with my hearing. Just like how I can 'taste' what you eat, I can also 'hear' what you hear. Exposing me to everyday sounds now – like the vacuum cleaner, passing traffic, or the family pet – will mean I'm less likely to be scared of them once I'm born.

Many women report all kinds of changes to their outside appearance during pregnancy – aside from your obviously expanding belly! We've talked about stretch marks and spots, but some other pregnancy symptoms might be a little less obvious. If you're seeing red palms and soles, blotchy legs, heat rash, or skin tags, those are all the result of some wild hormones wreaking havoc on your body. No worries, like most things related to pregnancy, they'll even themselves out after you deliver me. If something is really bothering you – like an itchy belly, yet another common side effect – talk to your doctor about safe treatments and solutions. Using something as basic as cocoa butter can help soothe tummy itches and even reduce the appearance of stretch marks.

You already know how important it is to get a good night's rest, so if you're having trouble sleeping, hone in on the reasons why. Waking up sweaty or chilled? Check your sheets and your sleepwear. A breathable material like cotton is key to letting air flow and keeps your body at a comfortable temperature while you sleep. Suffering from aches and cramps? How you position yourself in bed has a big impact on how you feel the next morning. Many moms feel most comfortable lying on their side – try putting a pillow between your legs to ease pressure on your joints. Overthinking things? It's not uncommon to feel anxious or uncertain about becoming a mom or my well-being. The best place to start working out your feelings is with

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your partner. Have a heart-to-heart about your fears and together you'll probably be able to overcome them.

I'm really excited to meet you and dad – just 17 weeks to go! Make sure that both of you remember, ***"There is such a special sweetness in being able to participate in creation."*** – Pamela S. Nadav (Women's Health Practitioner & Author)

Love,

Baby

PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 24 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

I'm still growing steady as ever – this week I'm as long as an ear of corn, and about the size of a cantaloupe overall. It's so funny that while I'm developing, I've got many of the features of an older person. Aside from filling in my deep-set wrinkles with baby fat, that hair I'm growing is without pigmentation. That's right, if you could see me right now, I'd have white hair! My lungs are still busy forming so my respiratory system will be primed to let me send out those big screams when I want your attention after I'm born. Altogether it's just about getting stronger; so don't be surprised if you feel those kicks and pokes a little more often as I wiggle around.

As for you, I know those pregnancy pain points are piling up: a sore back, swollen legs and ankles, and surprising cramps are all part and parcel of having a baby. A prenatal massage can do wonders for relieving stress and muscle tension. Meanwhile, between weeks 24 and 28, your doctor will likely give you a Glucose Challenge Test to ensure you don't have gestational diabetes while carrying me. The test is pretty simple: you'll be asked to drink a sugary beverage. An hour later, the doctor will draw some blood and see how your body is handling your sugar intake. If you've got high blood sugar, it can make me grow way too fast – complicating delivery and potentially causing you to have a caesarean section.

I know your belly is feeling a little plugged up, but what about your intestines? Lots of women report constipation while they're pregnant. The reason is a good one: those pesky pregnancy hormones have relaxed the muscles in your intestines so you hang onto food longer, giving your body as much time as possible to absorb the nutrients from all that vitamin-rich food you've been eating. Drinking plenty of water and fruit juices, and upping your fiber intake by eating whole grains, fruits, veggies, and legumes can all help ease any discomfort.

No matter what you're grappling with, remember: carrying a child is a serious blessing, even when it feels like a curse. ***“Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy and complaining about the shadow over my feet, I'd have cherished every moment of it and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was to be my only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.”*** – Erma Bombeck (Humorist & Columnist)

Love,

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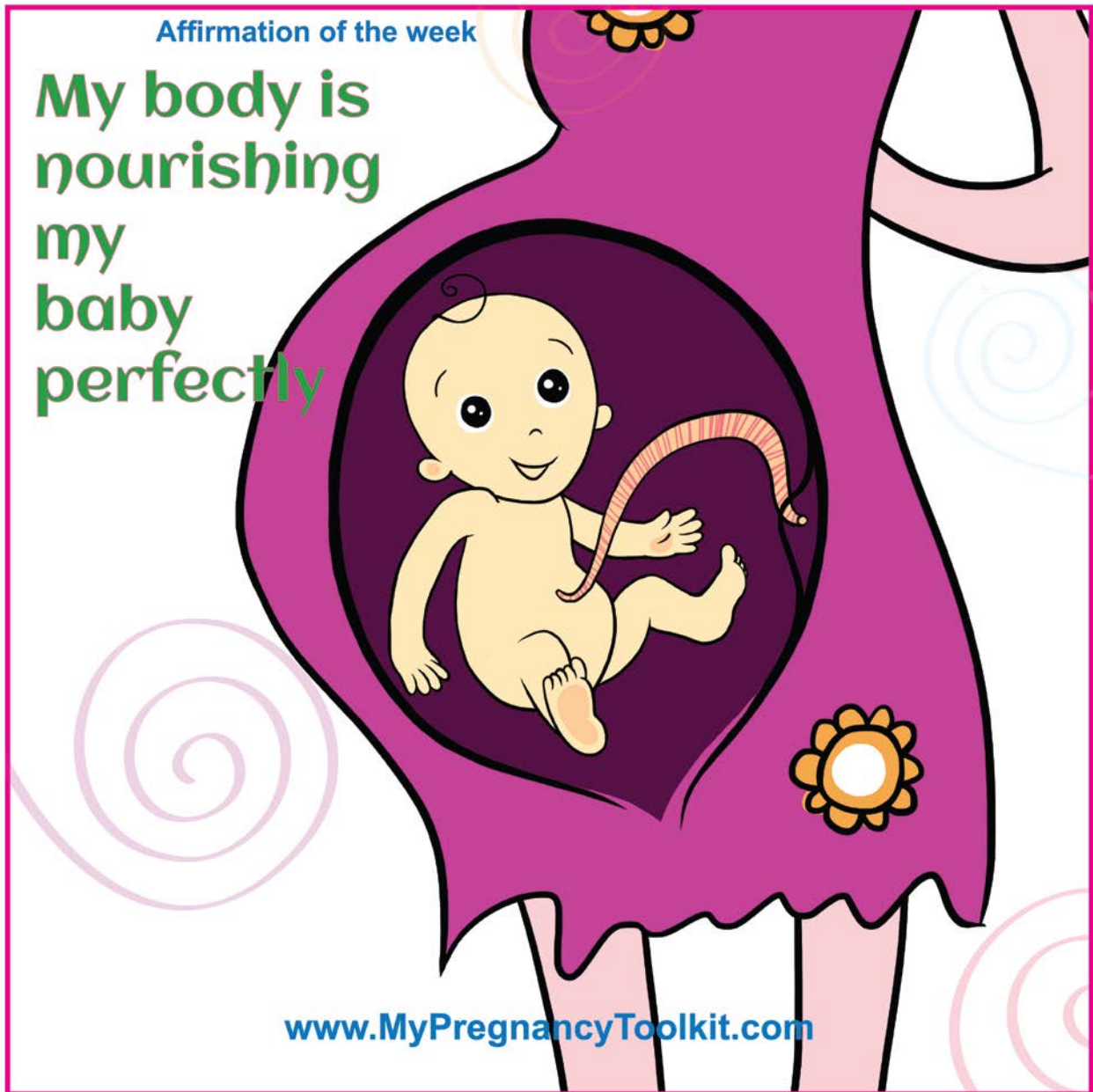
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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 25 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

This week is all about opening up! Namely, my nostrils have started clearing out and my vocal chords are forming nicely in preparation for when I take my first breath (and cry) outside of your belly. By the end of this week, the air sacs in my lungs will finish forming, but my lungs themselves aren't quite functioning. They're actually building up a layer of something called surfactant that will help them to expand once I've been born. My wrinkled skin is evening out, my hair is getting just a hint of pigmentation, and I'm now roughly the size of a head of cauliflower.

One of the latest and not-so-greatest developments you may be grappling with this week is the appearance of hemorrhoids. These swollen, itchy veins that appear around your rear end are a result your expanding uterus which is putting pressure on the area. Gobble down some fiber to keep yourself regular – studies have shown constipation can contribute to hemorrhoid development – and drink plenty of water to help kick these pesky symptoms to the curb. Like most ailments during your pregnancy, they should recede after I'm born.

If you're feeling a little less graceful than usual, now might be the time to schedule in some activities to prepare for my arrival. All of that baby furniture isn't going to assemble itself, and you definitely don't want to leave it to a point when your belly is taking over your life! Recruit some family members or close friends and make an afternoon out of it. While you're at it, consider baby-proofing the house by keeping sharp or unsafe objects out of reach, and sealing up any doors, cabinets, windows, or electrical sockets where I can potentially hurt myself.

Remember mom, you're going through a lot right now – it's okay to ask for help every now and again. ***"In the pregnancy process, I have come to realize how much of the burden is on the female partner. She's got a construction zone going on in her belly."*** – Al Roker

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

MY PARTNER AND I HAVE
A LOVING, HEALTHY PREGNANCY



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WEEK 26 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

I'm about the size of a head of lettuce and looking forward to seeing you – literally. Although my eyelids have been fused shut for most of the pregnancy process, during this week my eyelashes will form and I'll start to open my eyes a bit. Granted, there isn't a whole lot of scenery to take in while I'm in your belly, but an increased sensitivity to light might result in some extra activity. Same goes for sounds – as the nerves in my ears get sharper and my brain becomes better developed, I'll be able to start distinguishing the voices of you and the people you talk to. Sing me a lullaby or just tell me how excited you are to meet me; I'll be more likely to remember and be soothed by your voice if you do.

Although most moms find the second trimester the most manageable, you've still got to pay careful attention to the signals your body is sending you – it could be a sign of something more serious. Although it's normal to see a slight increase in blood pressure after a pregnancy low between weeks 22 and 24, it's important to stay on top of what your blood is doing. Preeclampsia is a serious blood pressure-related medical condition that typically doesn't pop up till 37 weeks or later, but it could appear as early as this week. If you see sudden bouts of intense swelling of your face, hands, feet, or ankles, or if you're experiencing rapid, unusual amounts of weight gain, talk to a doctor as soon as you can. More intense cases may warrant more extreme warning signs: vomiting, serious headaches, vision issues, and intense pain in your upper abdomen should all signal you to give your doctor a call, or your emergency room a visit.

Although I'm sure you already know this, the bigger and stronger I get, the more frequently you'll feel my punches and kicks. Some moms are actually surprised at just how powerful a tiny fist or foot can be – if my movements are ever causing you agony, there are ways to 'fight back'. If I'm ever in an uncomfortable position, try standing up, walking around, and performing mild stretches to encourage me to shift. It's actually safe to gently push on your belly as well, to unwedge my knobby knees and twitchy elbows from those tight nooks and crannies.

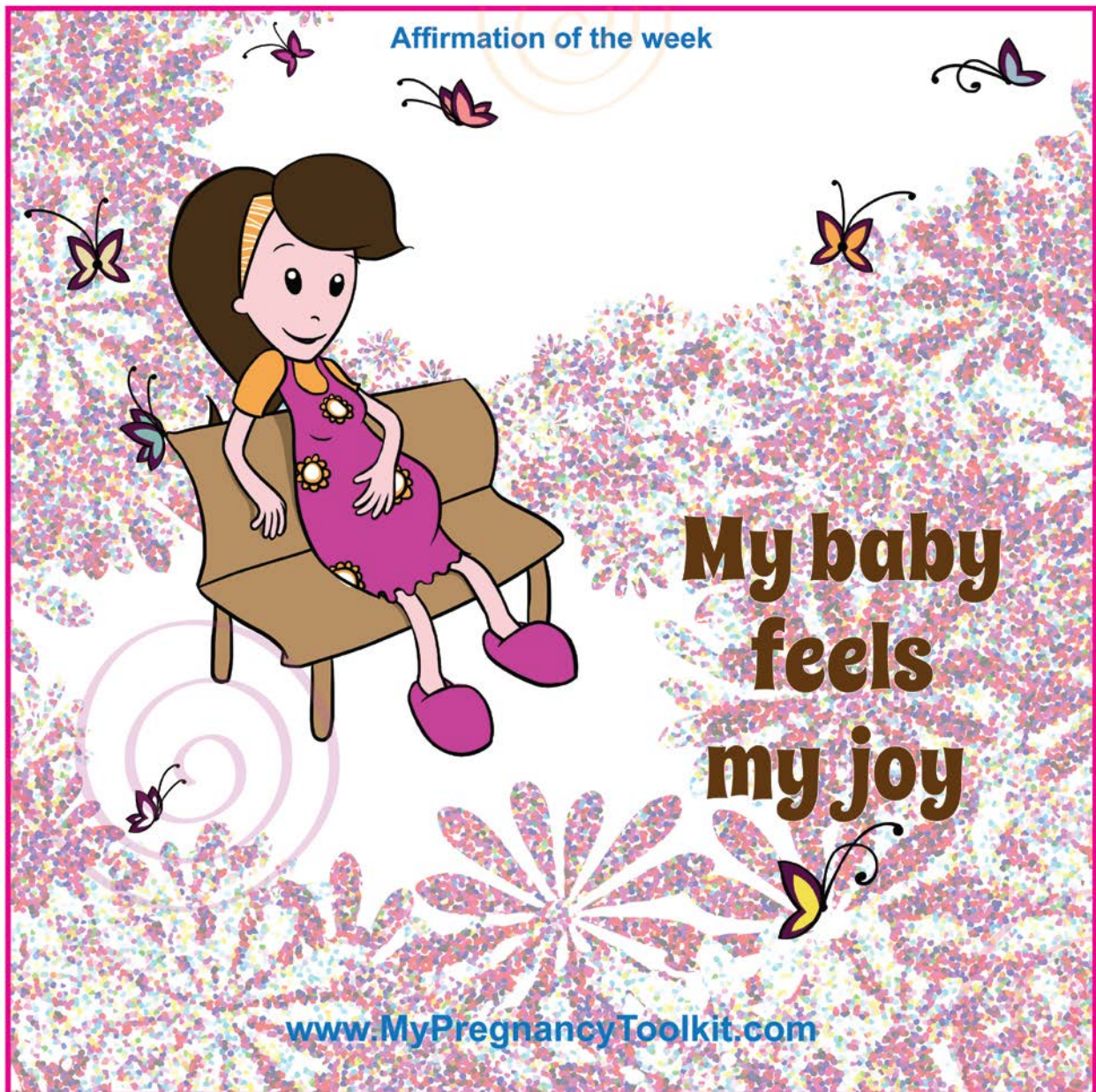
As I'm moving and you're growing, visualize the new little arrival you'll have in just a few months' time. Here's an unconventional take on what it's like to carry a baby: ***"The baby bounced gently off the wall of her uterus. She opened her dressing gown and put her hands back on her belly. It moved again, like a dolphin going through the water; that was the way she imagined it."*** – Roddy Doyle (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 27 – SECOND TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Want to know what I'm thinking? My brain activity is skyrocketing right about now as I take my time sleeping, listening, and practicing those essential tasks I'll need to perform when I'm born – like breathing and sucking. Although my lungs still aren't quite working, if I were to be born right this moment they'd actually function with the help of plenty of doctors and equipment. I weigh a whopping two pounds, and I'm about the size of a large rutabaga. I've also started growing in length. While in the early stages of pregnancy I'm typically measured by 'crown to rump' (owing to the fact my legs aren't quite developed), by this point you can start measuring me from 'crown to feet' – and I'm over 14 inches long!

When you were a kid, did you ever compare belly buttons with your friends? You know, how some kids have 'innies' and others have 'outies'? Well this week your innie might be looking more like an outie as I push against your abdomen. The good news is, once I'm born your belly button will snap back to its former 'innie self', although it might be a little wider than before. While some things are expanding on your body, other parts might be cramping. All that extra pressure on your legs from carrying weight around your mid-section may cause your limbs to seize up, particularly at night. Try gently massaging them, flexing your feet, or taking a walk to help ease tension.

Whether or not you've had a baby shower, chances are you've started collecting some things to help me get settled into my life outside your womb – like clothing and blankets. Whatever you buy, make sure you wash it before swaddling or dressing me. Many items contain irritants or harsh detergents that can bother my sensitive baby skin. Look for a special detergent that's either specifically formulated for babies or fragrance-free. As a hint, washing things early might be a good idea – you never know what complications (including just plain old exhaustion) might come up as your due date draws nearer.

And with that – some exciting news! You are officially done with your second trimester mom. I couldn't be more proud of you. ***"In giving birth to our babies, we may find that we give birth to new possibilities within ourselves."*** – Myla and Jon Kabat-Zinn (Authors)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week



I trust my
body to
deliver
to me a
healthy baby

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WEEK 28 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hey there mom,

Welcome to your third and final trimester! I'm dreaming about meeting you – literally. As of this week, I'm sleeping deeper than ever, getting into what's known as the Rapid Eye Movement (REM) phase. Many scientists believe it takes getting to this state that allows someone to dream, which means I could very well be thinking about my life beyond your belly. In the meantime, I've got plenty to keep me busy. I'm blinking, coughing, and even hiccupping. Oh yeah, and in case you were wondering, I'm now about the size of a large eggplant.

I know I've got my dancing shoes on as I jostle my way around your belly – but how about you? Around this stage, many moms report having the urge to wriggle, shake, and move their legs – something that's formally known as Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS). There's no real medical explanation for why RLS exists, but stretching or massaging your legs, taking walks, and cutting back on sugar and caffeine can all help tame those jittery limbs. It's also possible you're feeling a reverse sensation. As I shift positions in preparation for my arrival, I may settle onto your sciatic nerve, which can cause pains and tingling from your rear end down through the backs of your legs. Unfortunately, unlike RLS, there isn't a whole heck of a lot you can do to ease those prickly pains – just take it easy and hope that I find a position that's a little more comfortable for you in the coming weeks.

With just three months to go, it's time to investigate childbirth education classes. There are tons of options out there, so make sure you research and find a course that covers all of the topics you're concerned about. Some classes may be more focused on the labor and delivery process, while others might cover basic first aid, essential parenting skills, and even strategies for dealing with typical new parent struggles – from post-partum depression to exhaustion. If you're dealing with a unique pregnancy circumstance – like carrying twins, having your second child, or opting for a scheduled caesarean – you may also be able to find specialty courses to help make your transition into parenting a new baby that much easier.

We're in the home stretch now mom. Keep staying strong and taking care of yourself, and me; you have no idea how amazing your body really is. ***"There is no other organ quite like the uterus. If men had such an organ they would brag about it. So should we."*** – Ina May Gaskin (Midwife & Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**My body becomes stronger
and more
flexible every day**



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WEEK 29 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dearest mom,

This week your little baby-to-be is about the size of a butternut squash. Just like a squash, I'm starting to 'harden up' – that uber-flexible skeleton of mine is firming so I won't be quite so fragile and jelly-like outside of the womb. Because my skeleton is almost done taking shape, I'm basically at the length I'll be when you give birth to me. Of course, that doesn't mean I'm done growing. I'm still going to be gaining plenty of weight and filling out as my due date comes closer. The good news for you? As I grow bigger and more rigid, there's less room for me to throw a party in your belly – expect those sharp little jabs and kicks to start being less painful as I run out of space.

Even though I'm kicking less, those belly punts are still really important. After 28 weeks, your doctor may ask you to keep tabs on how often I'm moving. I'm not saying you have to count every single punt, but pay attention to two or three kicking fests per day. If I'm racking up at least 10 movements – whether rolling, kicking, or shifting – over the course of an hour, everything's great. Of course, I might be a little sluggish if you catch me at an off time. Try eating a piece of fruit to spike your blood sugar or taking a little walk to get me going. If even that doesn't perk me up and I'm not moving at least 10 times over 2 hours, it's time to put in a call to your doctor.

Are you feeling a little forgetful right about now? Many moms suffer from what's called, rather lightheartedly, 'pregnancy brain'. As per usual, it's those crazy pregnancy hormones wreaking havoc – only this time not on your body, but your mind. If you feel like you're walking around in a bit of a fog, you're not alone; in fact, your brain cell volume actually drops down once you've hit the third trimester. But, just like all those other pregnancy side effects, the good news is once I'm born, your mind should kick right back into high gear (if you can get over the sleep deprivation of course). In the meantime, try writing those essential things down: appointments, shopping lists, to-do items, you name it. Consider creating checklists for yourself to further cut down on mini-mishaps; one for when you leave the house (did you turn off the oven?) and one for when you come home (did you put your keys on the front hall table?)

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There is so much going on in your body right now, both in helping me get through these final weeks, and maybe driving you a little bit crazy. Just remember, ***“Giving birth and being born brings us into the essence of creation, where the human spirit is courageous and bold, and the body, a miracle of wisdom.”*** – Harriette Hartigan (Birth Photographer & Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



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WEEK 30 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Now that we're in your third trimester, I'll be packing on the pounds like crazy – right now I'm about three pounds, but I'll be adding about a half-pound a week until the day I'm born. For the time being, I'm roughly the size of a cabbage. As my brain gets more developed, so do some of my other senses. My eyesight is improving, although even after I'm born I'll still spend a good deal of the time with my eyes shut as my vision gets better and better. I'm able to actually regulate my own temperature now, meaning I can shed that soft, downy 'fur' I sprouted way back in week 14.

Because I'm gaining weight, you'll be gaining weight as well – expect to gain a pound a week at this point. Don't stress! A lot of that weight is all of the gushy stuff that's keeping me (who's also adding to those numbers on the scale) safe and sound in your belly, like amniotic fluid and the placenta. As you get bigger and bigger in these final months, you'll probably also feel more and more cumbersome. With a rounded mid-section throwing off your center of gravity, loose ligaments thanks to pregnancy hormones, and newly spread out feet, you may be a little clumsier and slower than usual. Just take it easy and remember, no one is expecting you to be at your most graceful right about now.

As we sprint (or slowly walk) toward the home stretch, here's a question for you: have you thought about breastfeeding? Some studies have shown that breastfeeding your little ones can reduce the need for orthodontic work in the future. In fact, breast milk is loaded with beneficial nutrients to help me develop in my earliest days outside of your body. Children that are breastfed have a lower risk of disease and infection both at birth and as a child, as well as lower rates of sudden infant death syndrome. It can even lead to higher IQ scores! Oh, and did I mention it helps new moms burn off tons of calories (and those pesky baby pounds)? If you're nervous about breastfeeding, don't worry – your medical team will guide you through it when I'm born. You can also talk to friends or your prenatal classmates to see how they're planning to tackle feeding their babies.

As I get bigger, I'm feeling closer to you than ever mom. Let's count down the weeks together!
"Pregnancy is getting company inside one's skin." – Maggie Scarf (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week



My baby
will find
the perfect
position
for birth

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WEEK 31 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

As my body continues to gain weight, I'm starting to plump up into that cuddly little baby you'll soon be holding in your arms. In fact, if you want to practice holding me at my current size, try picking up four oranges and swaddling them; that's about how big I am at the moment. I'm also settling into something of a routine. Between weeks 28 and 32, most babies start to develop patterns of rest and activity, although of course, every baby is unique. Some of us love to jiggle and shake what seems like all hours of the day (and night), while others might take breaks at certain, repeated times of day. What can I say, I need my rest as I get ready for birth!

You meanwhile, are probably more sleep-deprived than ever. Those persistent (yet hopefully less painful) somersaults and kicks can mean serious insomnia for already pregnancy-addled moms. One thing I wouldn't recommend is sleeping on your back. Because your uterus (and me) are so big, we're actually cramping your diaphragm and reducing the amount of airflow you've got access to. In fact, things will be that way until I drop a little further down your uterus in preparation for delivery. Sleeping on your back can further restrict how much oxygen you (and I) have access to. One of the most comfortable and healthy ways for you to try and catch some Zzzz's is by lying on your side with your legs crossed over one another and a pillow tucked in between them. It'll help get nutrients and oxygen to me, and help you get a better night's rest. Bonus! It may also help with those swollen legs and ankles.

With my due date just nine weeks away, you may start thinking about how you want the birthing process to go. Some women are determined to skip western pain medications, while others can't imagine giving birth without them. Still others may want to try for an all-natural birth, with the option to bring in drugs if things just get too painful or complicated. Ask your doctor or look online, if you haven't done so already, for a local childbirth education class. You'll have the chance to learn about all of the pain relief options available to you, along with their benefits and potential side effects. Of course, keep in mind – no matter how prepared you think you are for my arrival, things can always come up that may cause you to change your course or direction.

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I know we haven't talked about it much yet, but it's okay if you're a little anxious about the actual labor and delivery. Keep in mind, your body was made to do this. ***"Just as a woman's heart knows how and when to pump, her lungs to inhale, and her hand to pull back from fire, so she knows when and how to give birth."*** – Virginia DiOrio (Educator Nurse)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK



Affirmation of the week

**My body
is made
to give
birth,
nice and
easy**

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WEEK 32 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

Feeling a little crowded? It might be because I'm roughly the size of a large pineapple and busier than ever. First, I'm fattening up so my skin is less transparent and more opaque. Second, I'm perfecting all of those critical skills I'll need once I'm outside the womb – you know, sucking, swallowing, breathing. Finally, given my increasingly big size, your doctor may also be able to tell just how I've positioned myself. For the bulk of your pregnancy, I've been hanging out in what's called 'breech position', where my feet are closest to the bottom of your uterus. Over this week and the next, I'll probably start shifting around so I'm in a much more desirable spot for delivery – with my head appearing first and my feet coming out last.

So, even though I'm not here yet, but that doesn't mean your body isn't getting prepped for my arrival. Have you noticed some yellowish fluid (called 'colostrum') leaking from your breasts? That's just your body's milk factory getting geared up. No worries if you haven't seen any colostrum; your body is still very likely busy producing milk. If you've had an embarrassing mishap or two thanks to some liquid trickling out, consider investing in a nursing bra or buying nursing bra inserts for your regular bras right now. Here's a hint when buying a nursing bra: size up! When the milk is fully flowing, your breasts will be bigger than ever.

It's time for yet another decision surrounding my arrival: namely, who do you want in the delivery room with you? Going through labor is, for most women, an extremely personal and oftentimes challenging process (of course, it's all worth it). The question simply becomes, who would you like by your side as you're going through the process, and who do you want to share me with after I've arrived? Maybe it's just my dad, maybe it's just your families. Maybe you'd like an open door policy where any well-wishers can pop by after I'm born. No matter what you decide, make sure you communicate to your loved ones what your hospital visit preferences are. And don't worry, there are still ways to keep your friends and family in the loop; assign someone to post an online update, or to send out an email or text to a select group of people.

Can you believe we've only got two months left after this week? It's been a great ride so far mom, let's keep it going. ***"Pregnancy is a process that invites you to surrender to the unseen force behind all life."***
– Judy Ford (Author & Psychotherapist)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I LOVE MY HAPPY,
HEALTHY,
PREGNANT BODY**



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WEEK 33 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

So, I know I promised that I'd stop moving around so much as I run out of space (and grow to the size of an exotic fruit called a durian), but the truth is, as I get bigger, I also minimize the amount of amniotic fluid separating my movements from your body. That means you might be feeling those tiny hands and feet of mine more closely than before. Although I'm getting chubbier by the day, I've still got awhile to go. Believe it or not, for all the crazy amounts of growth and weight gain I've had so far, I'm actually going to gain half of my birth weight in these final weeks leading up to my arrival.

Speaking of labor, you've seen the movies or heard friends talk about their contractions – the tightening of the muscles in your uterus in preparation for my birth. But it's entirely possible you've already started feeling what's called Braxton Hicks contractions well before my due date. They'll typically last for about 15 to 30 seconds (although some women have them for up to 2 minutes), and be pretty irregular and painless. Learning to distinguish the difference between these 'fake' contractions and real ones is critical. Braxton Hicks contractions should disappear if you get up or shift positions. But if you're having contractions more frequently and they aren't disappearing when you move, you might actually be going into preterm labor. Keep an eye out for other preterm labor signs like cramping, a sore back, pelvic pressure, or a change in your vaginal discharge color and texture. If the symptoms are adding up, call your doctor or visit a hospital immediately so they can provide you (and me) with the medical attention we need.

We're less than two months away from being united outside of your belly – but with preterm labor a more realistic scenario the further along we got, the more important it is that you're prepared. Consider packing an overnight bag filled with the essentials and creature comforts you'll want with you at the hospital once I arrive. If something comes up – false alarm or otherwise – you'll be able to grab your bag and go without worrying about missing something critical during what's usually a pretty frantic time. Most moms will bring a change of clothes, basic toiletries, and possibly some special keepsakes or gifts to share with me. You'll also want to pack some sanitary pads, as your body will be flushing out 'lochia', the blood and mucus it no

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longer needs after I'm born. You can expect this bleeding to last heavily for about 10 days, but don't be surprised to see some spotting for up to 6 weeks after delivery.

Pregnancy is a big deal for even the most prepared woman. Just keep in mind, after I'm born, no one will ever be able to challenge whether you're strong. ***"If nature had arranged that husbands and wives should have children alternatively, there would never be more than three in a family."*** – Lawrence Housman (Playwright)

Love,

Baby

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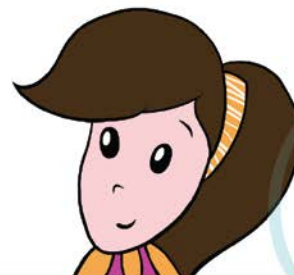
PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**My baby senses
the peace I feel**



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WEEK 34 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

Hopefully I'm not tickling you from the inside as my fingernails have pretty much reached the edge of my tiny fingertips. Also new? If I'm a boy, my testicles are dropping from my abdomen down to my scrotum. While you already know I'm gaining baby fat and my bones are hardening, the one place my bones aren't totally fused is my head. The reason? It's the biggest piece of my otherwise small body, and having slightly flexible bones makes it easier for me to be pushed through the birth canal. All that pressure can actually give me a bit of a 'conehead' at birth, at least until my bones have settled in my first year. Speaking of being firmly part of your world (outside of your uterus that is), some good news! Many premature babies born from weeks 34 onwards – as long as they don't have other medical issues – grow up to be perfectly healthy.

First a foggy mind, now foggy eyes? That's right, your pregnancy hormones have even started playing tricks with your eyesight. If your vision is feeling less sharp or your eyes are feeling more dry, you can chalk it up to being pregnant. Once again, your eyesight should return to normal once I'm born, so don't visit your optometrist just yet. Remember that state of exhaustion you felt way back in the first trimester? Fatigue may hit you like a tidal wave right about now thanks to those sleepless nights, which is why it's so important to have done as much prep work as possible – whether for my arrival, transitioning out of your job, or otherwise – leading up to this point.

One of the big questions many mummies-to-be ask themselves is what comes next after you've delivered your new little arrival. While of course we won't head home from the hospital till we're both given a clean bill of health, life pretty much continues on as before – only with a new, demanding interruption as part of your everyday routines. In preparation, consider leaning on friends and family now for some assistance in the weeks immediately after I'm born. Schedule some visitors so you can take a much-needed rest, stash some pre-prepared meals in the freezer, and arrange for transportation to appointments you're nervous about attending alone. And while you're at it? Get my car seat installed and inspected – if I arrive early, that's one necessity you'll definitely want in place.

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Even when you're feeling the most sluggish in these final weeks, just think of the end reward: your very own bundle of joy to cherish and love. And next time you look in the mirror? ***["Let us make pregnancy an occasion where we appreciate our female bodies."](#)*** – Merete Leonhardt-Lupa (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I visualize an easy,
peaceful, joyous and
pleasurable birth**



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WEEK 35 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

You are now officially carrying over 5 pounds of pure, homegrown baby in your belly – about the size of a honeydew melon! With my weight getting closer and closer to my birth weight (although I'll still likely have a ways to go in packing on the pounds), I'm pretty darn close to being fully developed. My kidneys and liver are both functioning, with my liver getting rid of some waste. Meanwhile my brain is still getting stronger and smarter each and every day – keep up talking to me; I'm very likely listening in on your conversations with friends and family.

Everyone's heard (or made) a joke about how often pregnant women have to pee. Believe it or not, your uterus has grown 1,000 times its normal size during these last eight months – and it's seriously cramping your insides. If you have to take constant trips to the washroom (especially during those already restless nights), consider practicing Kegel exercises. Kegels are gentle contractions of your pelvic floor muscles that are also useful during the birth process. And if you've had a little accident when coughing, laughing, or even being startled, pick up some incontinence pads for an extra layer of protection leading up to the big day.

With five weeks left and counting, you'll probably start seeing your doctor more regularly. Don't be afraid to ask them any of those lingering questions about the labor and delivery process. And don't be afraid when they run a few final tests on you, including checking for something called Group B streptococci (GBS). This bacteria is carried by up to 30% of women, and while it's harmless in adults, passing it onto me during birth can cause serious health issues like meningitis or a blood infection. If you do happen to be a carrier, don't stress. Your doctor will simply administer a particular drug during labor to reduce the chances of me getting sick.

I'm sure you're so full of love as you prepare for my arrival. Know that I'm just as excited to meet you and the rest of your family and friends. As a mother-to-be, consider that, ***"Now my belly is as noble as my heart."*** – Gabriela Mistral (Poet)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I trust my intuition



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WEEK 36 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

By the end of this week, you will be carrying a full-term baby. I know, I know, my due date isn't for another few weeks, but those last few weeks are really just giving me a little extra time to pile on the pounds and practice all of those essential new baby skills. Because I'm prepping for life in the 'real world', I'm getting rid of the last of the downy hair and waxy coating that's been protecting for the past eight months. Where does that stuff go? I actually swallow it, along with a bunch of other secretions, to form that blackish 'meconium' mixture that I'll pass in my first bowel movement (which sometimes occurs during birth).

At some point during these final weeks, you'll probably feel me 'drop' down so that I'm positioned right by your pelvis in preparation for delivery. Typically speaking moms who've already had a baby don't experience this 'lightening', so if you're on baby #2 (or more), don't worry if things feel a little different this go-round. Now, as you've probably guessed, a change in my position means a change in how you feel. Namely, you may feel more uncomfortable walking or feel some serious pressure in your birth canal. Of course, more pressure in your mid-section means more trips to the bathroom than ever. You also might be feeling those Braxton Hicks contractions more frequently. Remember the signs of a real contraction versus a 'fake' one – it'll save you false alarm trips to the hospital.

This week's big tip? As much as your life has changed already during pregnancy, it's about to change even more once I've arrived. Schedule some social time with your nearest and dearest now to take your mind off the stresses of pregnancy and enjoy some evenings out that you probably won't be able to take quite as easily once you've got a newborn in the house. Go on a special date night with my dad, enjoy a movie night with your close friends, or even just spend an evening with your own parents talking about their experiences when you were born. Cherish these final evenings, but of course, look forward to your future.

Talking things over – fears, worries, dreams, excitement – with your closest friends and family can be soothing in these final weeks. No matter what, I hope you believe that being a mom and being pregnant is truly a gift. ***"Babies are bits of stardust from the hand of God. Lucky the woman who knows the pangs of birth for she has held a star."*** – Larry Barretto (Author)

Love,

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Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I am focused on a
smooth, easy birth



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WEEK 37 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dear Mom,

Congratulations! You are now officially the carrier of a ‘full-term baby’, even though your due date is still three weeks away. If I arrive a little early, typically speaking my lungs will be functioning well enough by this point. I’m about the size of a bundle of Swiss chard, and I’m still gaining about half a pound a week. While that means I’ve nearly run out of room in your very expanded belly, it doesn’t mean I’m not going to be wiggling around a little bit. Also, my hair should be fully sprouted at this point, although not always; some babies are born with just a downy bit of peach fuzz, others come out with a full head of locks.

I have some good news for you this week (sort of). Over the course of your pregnancy, you’ve probably gained between 25 and 35 pounds. With the finish line in sight, you shouldn’t be packing on extra baby cushioning during these final weeks. While your weight should level off, other parts of your body are probably gearing up for labor: don’t be surprised if those ‘faux’ Braxton Hicks contractions appear a little more frequently, but do keep in mind the signs of a real contraction. You might see some spotting this week as well. It’s normal, but if there seems to be a fair bit of blood, visit your doctor or the hospital. Also, your doctor will keep tabs on whether I’ve dropped down toward your pelvis, and if your cervix has started to thin (called ‘effacement’) and dilate – both signs you’re getting closer and closer to delivery.

Has that nesting instinct kicked in yet? Although you may be feeling sluggish and cumbersome (to put it lightly) in these final weeks, many moms report an extra urge to tidy, clean, and organize, all in anticipation of their new baby’s arrival. You might be putting the finishing touches on my nursery or reorganizing your cupboards – whatever the case, there’s nothing wrong with putting a little extra effort into your ‘nest’ before I’m born, as long as you take it easy. After all, once you have a little one to take care of, all those household chores might take a back burner to the day in and day out work of being a parent.

Finally, some encouraging words for you from your full-term baby. ***“You are pregnant and you are powerful. You are bold and you are beautiful. Go forward in your boldness, in your beauty and in your connectedness. Trust your body to birth and know that the collective power of women worldwide will be with you.”*** – Unknown

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

My baby will be born
at the perfect time



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WEEK 38 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hey mom,

If you feel like you're carrying a beach ball in your belly right about now, you're pretty darn close – I'm roughly the size of a watermelon! Right now it's all about fine-tuning both my inside functions (my nervous system is still gearing up) and my outside appearance (as the last of the fur and waxy coating I've been sporting disappears). I'm also testing out my grip so I can firmly (but lovingly) grasp your fingers outside of the womb. At this point, the iris – or colored part – of my eye has filled in, although the color you see at birth may not be the color I end up with. While brown-eyed babies typically keep their chocolate tint, blue or gray eyes can easily shift to a rainbow of shades including green, hazel, or lighter or darker shades of blue. And hey, I've already practiced blinking my peepers, so get ready for me to flutter those baby eyelashes at you!

Right about now I know you're anxiously playing the waiting game. Your body loves to give you little hints that I'm on my way. If you see a slightly bloody, mucus-y discharge, that's a good sign you're close to delivery. Same goes for diarrhea – after months of constipation, your body may be loosening up more than ever in preparation for my arrival. Of course, you might also be dealing with an itchy belly, swollen ankles, and those shooting pains in your vagina and legs thanks to me settling in to what I'd call the 'delivery zone' in your pelvis.

If you're feeling particularly restless – despite the fatigue and general maladies you're dealing with – consider doing some productive activities that aren't too strenuous. For example, while friends and family will likely pop by with a casserole or takeout in the first few weeks, how about stocking your freezer for the long haul so meals become mindless once I'm born? Invite a friend over or recruit your spouse to spend a day in the kitchen creating all kinds of freezer-ready meals like lasagna or soup. Just don't overdo it! Take breaks while things are cooking in the oven, or determine what activities can be done while sitting at a counter (like chopping vegetables).

I know you're anxious mom, but we're so close. Just a little bit longer and soon I'll be yours to cuddle and love. ***"Life is always a rich and steady time when you are waiting for something to happen or hatch."*** – E.B. White (Author)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I FULLY RELAX AND TURN
MY BIRTHING OVER TO NATURE**



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WEEK 39 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

I know. It's not an easy job carrying something the size of a pumpkin around every day. But that's the size I am, and I'm still happily gaining some chub in my final days. I'm shedding some of that earlier skin to reveal new fresh layers that'll be that much tender and softer for you to snuggle. Speaking of my skin, it's probably pretty pale and whitish right now instead of the plump pink shade I've been for most of your pregnancy. Even if I'm to have darker skin, my body's pigmentation hasn't fully kicked in just yet. Finally, my brain is still developing like crazy – something it'll keep on doing for the next three years. And to support my brain's development, my neck muscles are also beefing up – but you'll still need to support my head after I'm born.

While Braxton Hicks contractions are one thing, many women go into what's called false labor around this point. These contractions may feel like the real deal – with sharp pains starting in the front of your body – but you'll know you're really having me when they start at the top of your uterus and work their way down. And of course, they'll also be more frequent and regular. Other signs pregnancy is really (at least possibly) coming? If your water breaks, which occurs when membranes are ruptured and the amniotic fluid that's been keeping me safe and sound leaks out. Or, you might see your mucus plug come out, which is the stuff that's been keeping your uterus sealed tight. Keep in mind that even if you have one of these things happen, that doesn't necessarily mean you're ready to go into labor. It does mean you should get in touch with your doctor though.

I know we've been really focused on the time leading up to my arrival, but let's talk about what to expect afterwards. First, you may have something like a period, called 'lochia' for anywhere from one to six weeks. Second, you'll shed some of that baby fat pretty quickly. If you stepped on a scale within the first week, you'll see you've lost up to 20 pounds between my weight, and all of that amniotic fluid and other protective cushioning your body was carrying. That doesn't mean your body will snap back into its former shape – but at the very least you won't be tipping the scales anymore. Finally, although mood swings are most closely identified with pregnancy, you might get the baby blues in those first few weeks of insomnia, stress, and a complete

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overhaul of your former life. Talk it out and lean on your loved ones for a little extra care and support – most women’s emotions center themselves after about three weeks time.

As the days tick by, know you’re closer and closer to meeting me. You can do it! I already know what you’re thinking; ***“Before you were born I carried you under my heart. From the moment you arrived in this world until the moment I leave it, I will always carry you in my heart.”*** –

Unknown

Love,

Baby

PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week



**I am willing to release
my baby into the world**

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WEEK 40 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

This is it! Your due date should occur in your 40th week – although unfortunately, not all due dates are accurate, and very few babies actually say hello to the world on the big day. In fact, only half of babies will actually be born at this point. That being said, my birthday is coming up; most doctors won't let their patients go past the 42nd week. There's really not much left for me to do in terms of developing, but the longer I stay in the womb, the more weight (and hair and brain power) I'll likely be building up. The good news is, I've got enough fat to maintain my ideal body temperature once I'm born. Keep in mind that I should still be shuffling around your mid-section, even in these final days. If I'm not or my movements are feeling slow, contact your doctor to make sure everything's okay.

Really though, this final stage of pregnancy is all about you. There can be a lot of anticipation and expectations placed on your due date, and every little twinge, bump, and ache can feel like a hopeful sign I'm on the way. Keep in mind that some of those pregnancy signs may not happen to you before you go into labor – your water may not break, your mucus plug may not loosen, but you'll definitely know when your body is ready to welcome me to the world. If you're stressed about pushing out your not-so-little baby, don't worry: your body was designed to do this. Most babies only grow as big as their mom's bodies will allow, and my not-quite-fused skull bones are designed to make squeezing me out a little easier. It's a big task, but I know you're up to it.

If I do choose to arrive this week, it's best to be prepared. Make sure that overnight bag is packed with the essentials you'll want at the hospital. Update your contact list and have family and friends on notice to either meet you at the hospital or manage essential errands like feeding your pets or taking care of your other children. Keep your car's gas tank filled up so you don't run into any mishaps en route to the hospital. Consider buying a waterproof sheet for your bed in case your water breaks overnight. Having all these little tasks done before can really minimize your stress level when I'm really ready to come out and say hello to the world.

Congratulations mom! Hopefully we'll be meeting each other soon – if not this week, within the next few. I couldn't have done this without you, and I can't wait for us to meet for the first time. ***"Birth is the sudden opening of a window, through which you look upon a stupendous prospect. For what has happened? You have exchanged nothing for the possibility of everything."*** – Unknown

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I have patience



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WEEK 41 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Hi mom,

If you're feeling kind of down about missing your due date, relax – only 5% of babies actually show up on their predicted birthday. Chances are I'm not actually overdue – it's far more likely that your due date was inaccurate. Even though I'm getting pretty cramped in your belly, I should still be moving and grooving a bit. Your doctor will likely keep close tabs on me with your help; including how often I'm moving, what my heartbeat is like, and whether anything feels particularly different. While you're keeping a pulse on how I'm doing, my endocrine system is gearing up and producing a flood of stress hormones. Many doctors actually theorize that stress hormones are what triggers your body's shift into labor, so rest assured, I'm doing my part to say goodbye to your womb.

So what's going on with your body? You might be feeling alternate bursts of energy and fatigue. That get-up-and-go feeling comes from that still-going nesting instinct, while the exhaustion is a result of the fact you're still carrying around a pretty hefty load. Because I'm so big, expect to make more frequent trips to the washroom than ever – so practice those Kegel exercises! And remember, keep an eye out for those telltale signs that labor is around the corner: extreme versions of menstrual cramps can signal contractions, spotting or vaginal discharge can be signs of a loosening mucus plug, and of course, your water breaking (whether a trickle or a gush) are all good reasons to pack up and hit the hospital.

Although I'm not overdue just yet, you're probably eagerly awaiting my arrival. While there's not a whole heck of a lot of concrete scientific proof for any of those 'tricks' to help induce labor, it's possible one of these might be the trigger you're looking for. If you've given up your pregnancy workout routine, try strapping on some sneakers and taking a walk around the neighborhood – the force of gravity and the wiggling of your hips can actually increase pressure on your cervix and help get the labor train going. The next idea is to have some fun in the bedroom. Semen contains prostaglandins, which can stimulate contractions. There are also plenty of theories that eating spicy food, pineapple, or eggplant are also labor inducers. While they may not work for you, it's not the worst idea ever to scarf down a few more fruits and veggies before my birth, so give it a whirl. If something seems a little strange or risky, talk to your practitioner before trying it.

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I know you're feeling anxious mom, but try not to worry about me too much. Enjoy these final days on your own, and remember, ***"We should recognize that women become mothers the moment they are pregnant."*** – Alveda King (Minister)

Love,

Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

**I SURRENDER TO
MY BODY'S WISDOM**



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WEEK 42 – THIRD TRIMESTER

Dear mom,

So I'm still hanging in there, and I'm guessing you're none too pleased about it. Most doctors won't let a pregnancy go past week 42 because there are some potential risks for keeping me baking in your oven for too much longer. Namely, the bigger I get, the less effective the placenta is at being able to nourish and take care of me. Assuming your labor is induced by the end of this week, you might be surprised at how I look when I finally make my grand entrance: because I shed my protective coating a while ago, my skin might be wrinkled, dry, or peeling. Don't worry though, it's all temporary – soon enough I'll be plumped up and as snuggly as can be.

Like I said before, many women that believe they're overdue really aren't. To be considered 'overdue' means your pregnancy genuinely goes past 42 weeks – something only 2% of women experience. Chances are you're more likely a victim of an inaccurate due date. Because of the potential health risks for keeping me in your womb, you and your doctor may choose to induce labor this week. If your water hasn't broken, your doctor may 'strip the membranes' by running a finger along your cervix and pulling the membranes along in a circular motion. This softens your cervix and increases the chances of labor within 30 hours, but it can also cause a bit of cramping and bleeding. You may also be given a medication – either a topical one to soften your cervix, or a drug called Pitocin, which stimulates your uterus into starting contractions. The contractions you'd get from Pitocin are typically stronger than a 'normal' labor, but if I'm your first baby you won't even be able to tell the difference.

One of the hardest parts of Week 42 is battling your emotions. Learn to accept your anxiety or disappointment and try and focus on the positives. In fact, I recommend doing something nice for yourself. Make a trip to the salon (with pregnancy-safe treatments), invite a friend over for lunch, or make a post-pregnancy clothing purchase. While you're at it, take advantage of the extra time and cross off those final to-do's with a flourish: picking up groceries, prepping some freezer meals, or putting the finishing touches on my nursery. Finally, keep friends and loved ones at bay; consider sending out a daily email or social media update so you can avoid constant inquiries into what's happening with your uterus.

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I guess all that's left to say is 'thank you'. By the end of this week I'll have (likely) entered into the world, your life, and your heart. ***"We can't understand when we're pregnant how profound it is to have a shared history with a younger generation: blood, genes, humor. It means we were actually here, on Earth, for a time – like the Egyptians with their pyramids, only with children."*** – Anne Lamott (Writer)

Love,

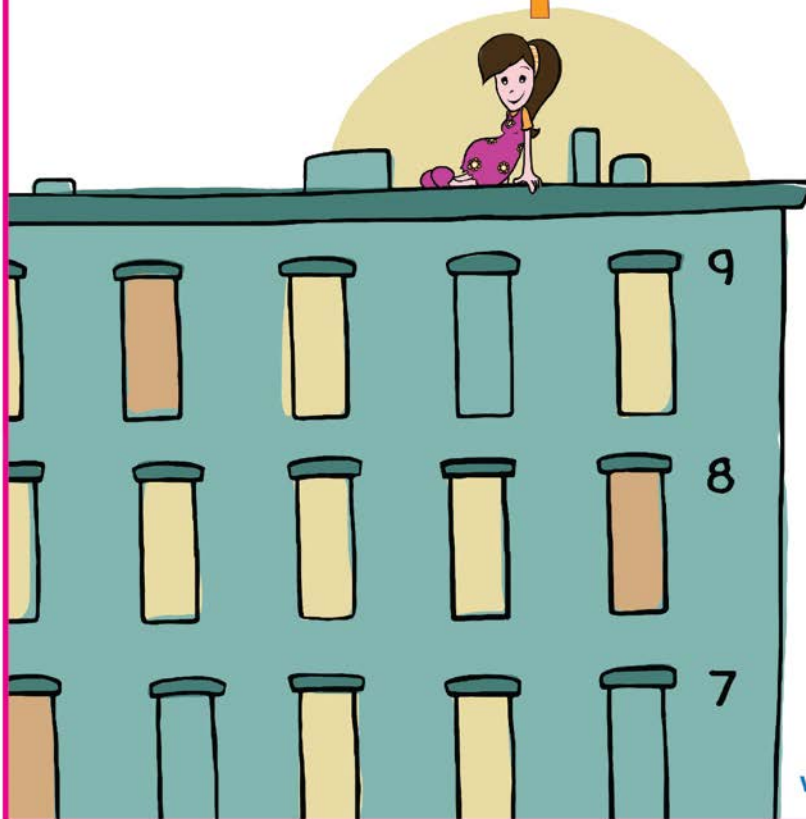
Baby

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PREGNANCY AFFIRMATION OF THE WEEK

Affirmation of the week

I have courage, faith
and patience



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Einat is a mother to a lovely girl.

She has been studying for the last 15 years the powerful ways to use your mind & subconscious and live a quiet, peaceful and better life.

She tries to live according to the methods she's learned in all areas of her life.

Einat believes in the principles of flow , liberation and positive thinking.

That's why she loves the shape of the spiral.

She implements these principles in her daily life.

She's on an endless journey of her personal development and tries to do the best she can.

When she became pregnant with her first daughter, she implemented the tools she learned about herself in order to have an easy, pleasant and empowering pregnancy. Einat had many concerns about the birth process but with the tools and techniques which she applied to herself she was able to overcome these concerns and gave a natural childbirth to a healthy daughter.

Einat is the co-founder of a new pregnancy web site www.MyPregnancyToolkit.com that brings a set of practical tools for pregnant women that focus on the pregnancy issues from the mind's perspective.



Your success means a lot to me.

If you have a comment or question, please contact me at my email address:

contact@myPregnancyToolkit.com

My wish is for you to have a healthy pregnancy accompanied by an easy, painless birth.



My Pregnancy Toolkit

Simple Tools for Busy Women that will Enable You
to Enjoy an Easy Pregnancy and Childbirth 

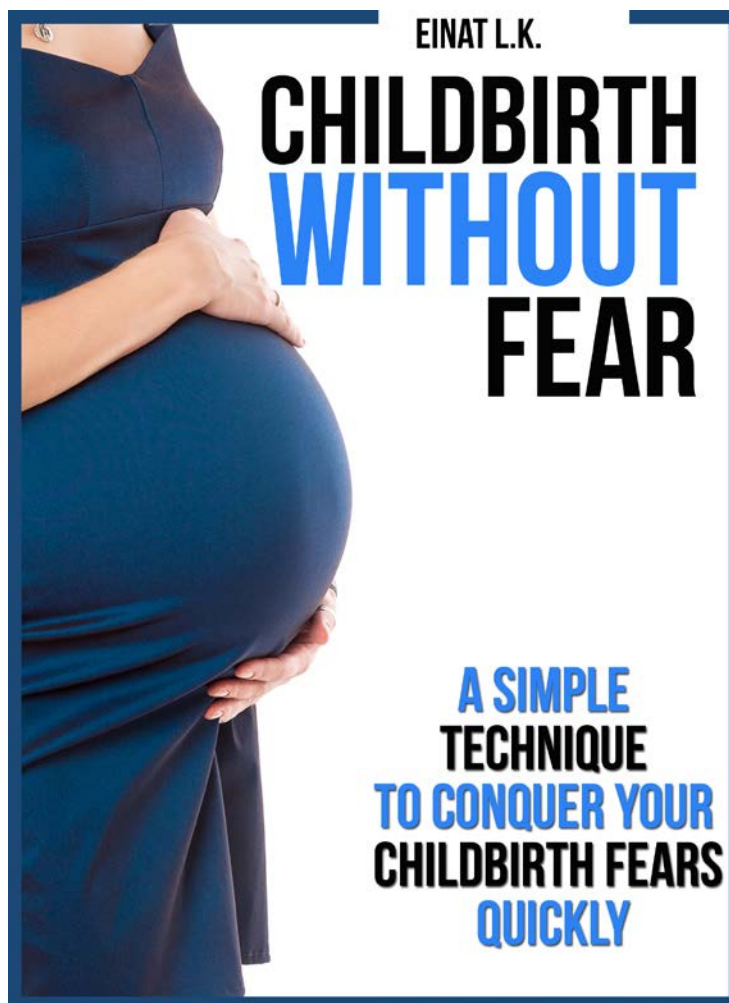
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- The Bonding meditation**
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- The Beam of Light meditation**
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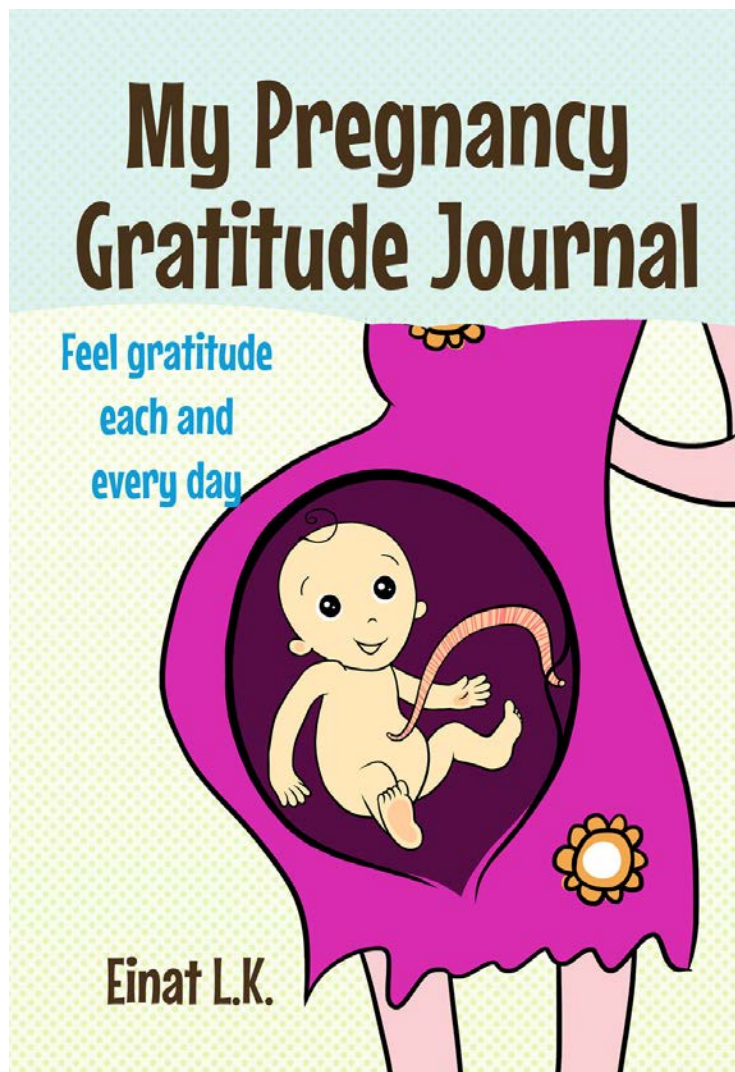
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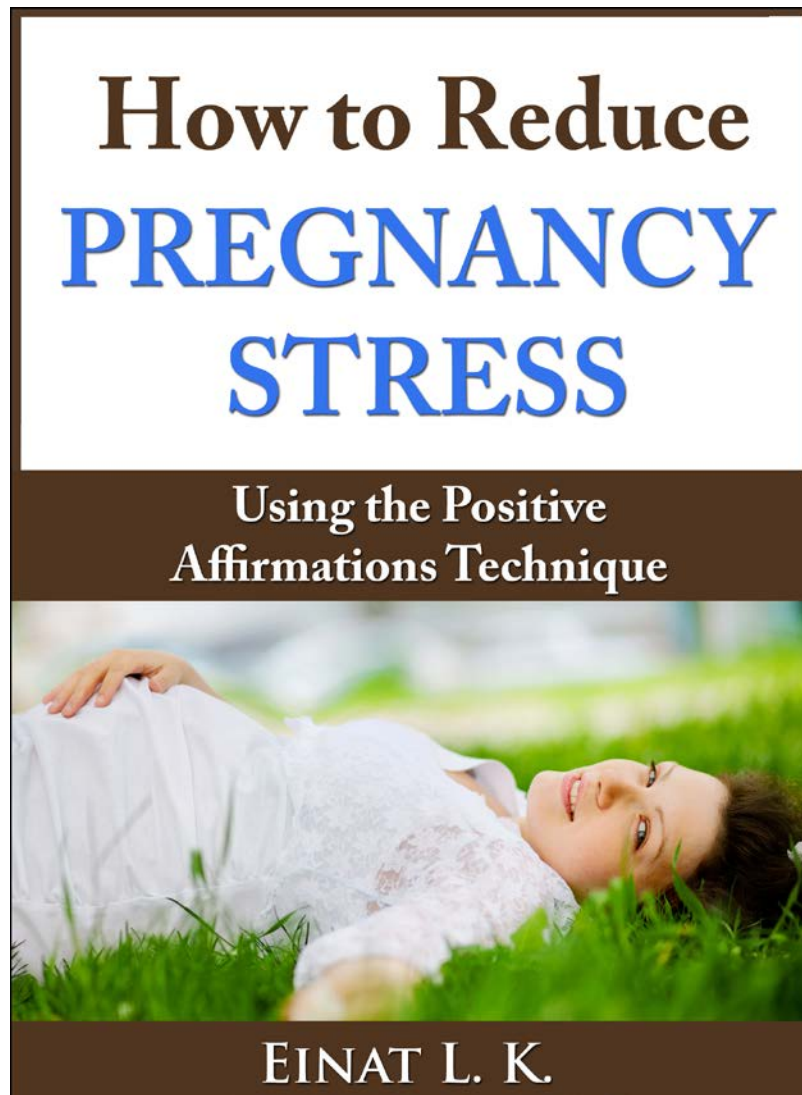
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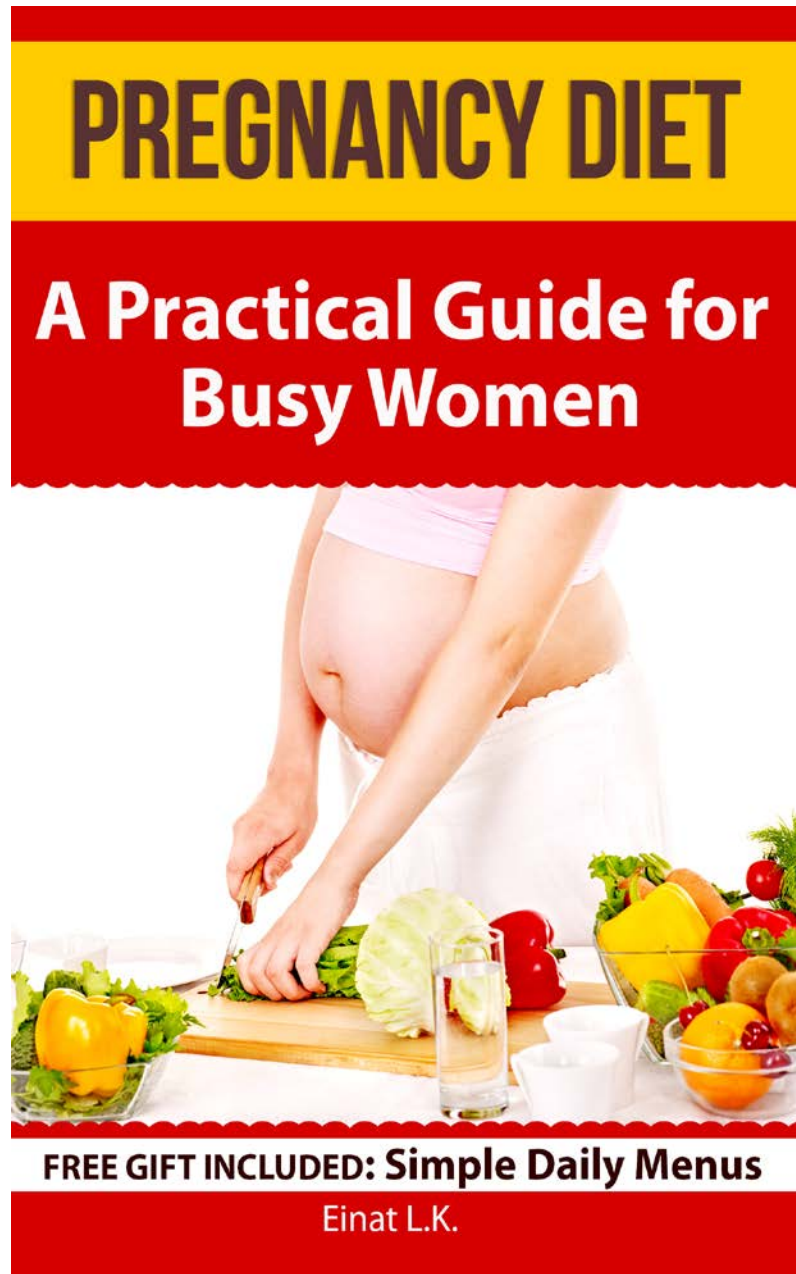
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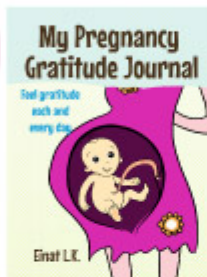


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