

# Understanding Your Pregnancy

A Complete Guide for Expecting Mothers



HELLO

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Centre for Women's  
Health & Wellness



## INTRODUCTION

# Your Pregnancy Journey



Congratulations on embarking on one of the most beautiful and life-changing journeys of your life! Pregnancy is a unique experience that fills your heart with joy, excitement, and anticipation as you await the arrival of your little one. However, it can also bring along a mix of emotions, questions, and challenges. This guide is designed to support you through every step of your pregnancy, helping you understand the changes in your body, manage any discomforts, and prepare for the arrival of your baby with confidence and joy.

# The Miracle of Pregnancy

Pregnancy is truly a miraculous process. Over the course of nine months, your body will undergo significant changes, and your baby will grow from a tiny fertilized egg to a fully developed infant, ready to enter the world. Each stage of pregnancy brings its own set of developments, and understanding these stages will help you feel more in control and less anxious as you move through this remarkable journey.



## Your Body's Amazing Transformation



As you progress through pregnancy, your body will undergo many transformations. Some are visible, like the growing belly, while others are internal, as your body works hard to nourish and protect your baby. These changes can be both exciting and challenging, and understanding what's happening inside your body will help you feel more empowered.

You might experience different physical and emotional changes at various points during your pregnancy. From morning sickness to fatigue and the excitement of feeling your baby's first movements, each change is part of your body's natural way of preparing for childbirth.



## Every Pregnancy is Unique

No two pregnancies are the same. Every woman's experience will be slightly different, and it's important to remember that what you experience is completely normal for your own journey. You may have some symptoms that others don't, or you might experience a completely smooth pregnancy with minimal discomfort. Either way, trust your body and remember that it's doing an incredible job of growing a tiny human!



## Your Support System

Pregnancy is not a journey you need to walk alone. Surround yourself with a supportive network of family, friends, and healthcare providers who can guide you through each step. Whether it's advice on what foods to eat, tips for managing morning sickness, or just a listening ear when you need it, having support makes all the difference.

In this book, we've broken down everything you need to know about pregnancy—from the early stages to preparing for labor and beyond. The goal is to provide you with information, advice, and resources to make your pregnancy experience as smooth, healthy, and enjoyable as possible.

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# What's Inside?

THROUGHOUT THIS BOOK, WE'LL COVER THE FOLLOWING KEY TOPICS

- Your Week-by-Week Pregnancy Guide: Understand what's happening with your body and your baby during each trimester.
- Physical and Emotional Changes: Learn about the changes you might experience and how to manage them.
- Nutrition and Wellness: Discover what to eat, what to avoid, and how to stay healthy during pregnancy.
- Exercise and Relaxation: Find safe ways to stay active and relaxed as you prepare for your baby.
- Preparing for Birth: Know what to expect as you approach labor and delivery.

This journey is filled with wonder, and while there will be challenges, the rewards of motherhood will be more than worth it. Keep in mind that pregnancy is a time for you to bond with your baby even before their arrival, and the more informed and prepared you are, the more you can enjoy every moment of it.



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We hope this guide helps you navigate the exciting and sometimes overwhelming adventure of pregnancy with joy and confidence. Your body is capable of incredible things, and with the right knowledge and support, you can make this journey a positive and fulfilling experience.

**Welcome to your pregnancy journey—let's take this step by step, together!**

WEEK-BY-WEEK BREAKDOWN:

# What’s Happening to You and Your Baby



Pregnancy is divided into three trimesters, and each week brings its own set of changes for both you and your growing baby. Below is a detailed week-by-week breakdown of what you can expect during your pregnancy. This guide will help you understand the remarkable growth and development your baby undergoes and how your body is adjusting to support them.





(WEEKS 1-12)

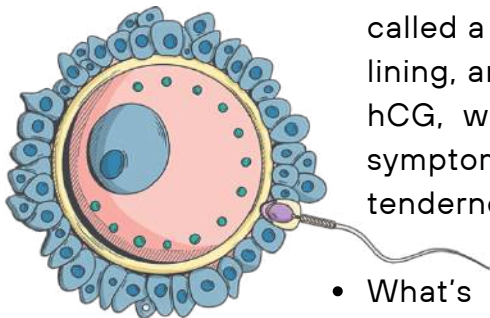
# First Trimester

## Week 1-2: Pre-conception and Early Changes

- **What's Happening to You:** The first two weeks are before conception, but it's important to track your cycle, as this is when ovulation and fertilization happen. Your body will begin preparing for pregnancy even before you realize you're pregnant.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** During these weeks, your baby is just a fertilized egg that begins to travel down the fallopian tube towards the uterus.



## Week 3-4: Fertilization and Implantation



- **What's Happening to You:** The fertilized egg, now called a blastocyst, will implant itself into the uterine lining, and your body begins producing the hormone hCG, which supports pregnancy. Early pregnancy symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, and breast tenderness may begin to appear.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby's cells rapidly divide, and early organs and systems begin to form. The heart, brain, and spinal cord start to develop.

## Week 5-6: Heartbeat and Early Symptoms

- **What's Happening to You:** Around week 5, you may experience more noticeable symptoms like nausea (morning sickness), frequent urination, and a heightened sense of smell. You may also feel more tired than usual.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby's heart begins to beat, and facial features start to take shape. Tiny arm and leg buds appear, and the neural tube, which will become the brain and spinal cord, continues to form.



## (WEEKS 1-12)

### Week 7-8: Major Development

- **What's Happening to You:** Your body is continuing to adjust to pregnancy. Hormonal changes can cause mood swings, and your breasts may become fuller and more tender.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby's tiny arms and legs start to develop more fully, and small fingers and toes begin to form. The baby is growing rapidly, and the facial features like eyes and nostrils are more distinct.

### Week 9-10: Organ Development



- **What's Happening to You:** You may feel more bloated, and you may notice your clothes becoming tighter. Morning sickness peaks around this time but often improves as you move into the second trimester.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby's organs are continuing to grow. The intestines, kidneys, and liver are beginning to develop and function. The baby's facial features become even more refined.

### Week 11-12: Transition to the Second Trimester

- **What's Happening to You:** By the end of week 12, you may begin to feel less nauseous as the placenta takes over hormone production. You might also start showing a small baby bump.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby is now fully formed, with all major organs and structures in place. Fingernails and hair follicles begin to form, and your baby is moving around, though you likely won't feel it yet.



(WEEKS 13-26)

# Second Trimester

## Week 13-14: Growth and Energy Boost

- **What's Happening to You:** You may begin to feel more energetic as the symptoms of the first trimester subside. Your bump may become more noticeable as your uterus grows.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby's eyes are fully formed, though they remain closed. It's also possible to hear your baby's heartbeat with a Doppler at this stage.



## Week 15-16: Baby's Movement and Development



- **What's Happening to You:** You may start feeling your baby move, often referred to as "quickening." These movements can feel like flutters or gentle taps.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby is growing rapidly, with bones hardening and the skin becoming more opaque. Your baby's movements become more coordinated, and they may start sucking their thumb.

## Week 17-18: Increased Appetite and Body Changes

- **What's Happening to You:** Your appetite may increase as your body needs more calories to support your growing baby. You might also begin experiencing back pain as your center of gravity shifts.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is now about the size of a mango, and the skeleton is hardening. The baby's skin is developing fine hair (lanugo) that will eventually fall off.

(WEEKS 13-26)

## Week 19-20: Halfway Point



- **What's Happening to You:** You may begin to feel more energetic as the symptoms of the first trimester subside. Your bump may become more noticeable as your uterus grows.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby's eyes are fully formed, though they remain closed. It's also possible to hear your baby's heartbeat with a Doppler at this stage.

## Week 21-22: Increased Movement

- **What's Happening to You:** Your belly will be noticeably round, and you may begin feeling more pressure as your uterus expands. You may experience some swelling in your feet and ankles.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is now able to move vigorously, and you might start noticing regular kicks and rolls. The baby's skin continues to form and become more opaque.

## Week 23-24: Organ Maturation

- **What's Happening to You:** This is a time when many women feel a little more weight and pressure in the pelvic area as the baby grows. You might also experience skin changes such as stretch marks or darkened skin in certain areas.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby's lungs are developing, and the baby can now practice breathing movements. The brain and nervous system continue to develop rapidly.



(WEEKS 13-26)

## Week 25-26: Preparing for Life Outside the Womb

- **What's Happening to You:** Your body is preparing for labor, and you may feel some discomfort, including back pain and leg cramps. You may also experience Braxton Hicks contractions, which are practice contractions for labor.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is getting ready for birth by practicing breathing and swallowing. The baby's eyes may now open and close, and the body continues to accumulate fat for insulation after birth.



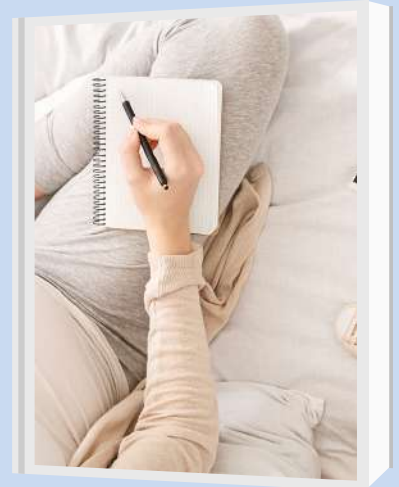


(WEEKS 27-40)

# Third Trimester

## Week 27-28: Preparing for Birth

- **What's Happening to You:** Your growing belly may make movement more challenging. You might experience shortness of breath or difficulty sleeping as you near the end of pregnancy. You'll likely have more frequent check-ups during this time.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby's brain and lungs are continuing to mature. They are gaining weight rapidly, and you may feel the baby's movements more intensely as they become larger.



## Week 29-30: Growth Spurts and Increased Discomfort



- **What's Happening to You:** As your baby continues to grow, you might experience discomfort such as back pain, heartburn, and trouble sleeping. Your body is also preparing for labor, which may lead to more frequent contractions (Braxton Hicks).
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is getting bigger and stronger. They are also developing a regular sleep-wake cycle and can now react to loud noises.

## Week 31-32: Final Weeks of Development

- **What's Happening to You:** You may feel more emotional and tired as you near the end of pregnancy. Your uterus is growing, and you may feel increased pressure on your bladder, causing more frequent urination.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is gaining fat, and the skin is smoothing out. They are now able to recognize voices, and their movements are more coordinated.



(WEEKS 27-40)

## Week 33-34: Getting Ready for Birth

- **What's Happening to You:** As your body prepares for delivery, you may begin experiencing lightening, where the baby drops lower into the pelvis. You might also start noticing more frequent or intense Braxton Hicks contractions.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is continuing to grow, and the bones are becoming stronger. The baby is likely to be in the head-down position, getting ready for birth.

## Week 35-36: Nearing the Finish Line

- **What's Happening to You:** You might feel a bit more tired as you get closer to delivery. You may experience pelvic discomfort and difficulty sleeping, and some women may have pre-labor signs like nesting or low back pain.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** The baby's body is filling out with fat, and they are getting ready for life outside the womb. They continue to practice breathing and may now weigh around 5 to 6 pounds.



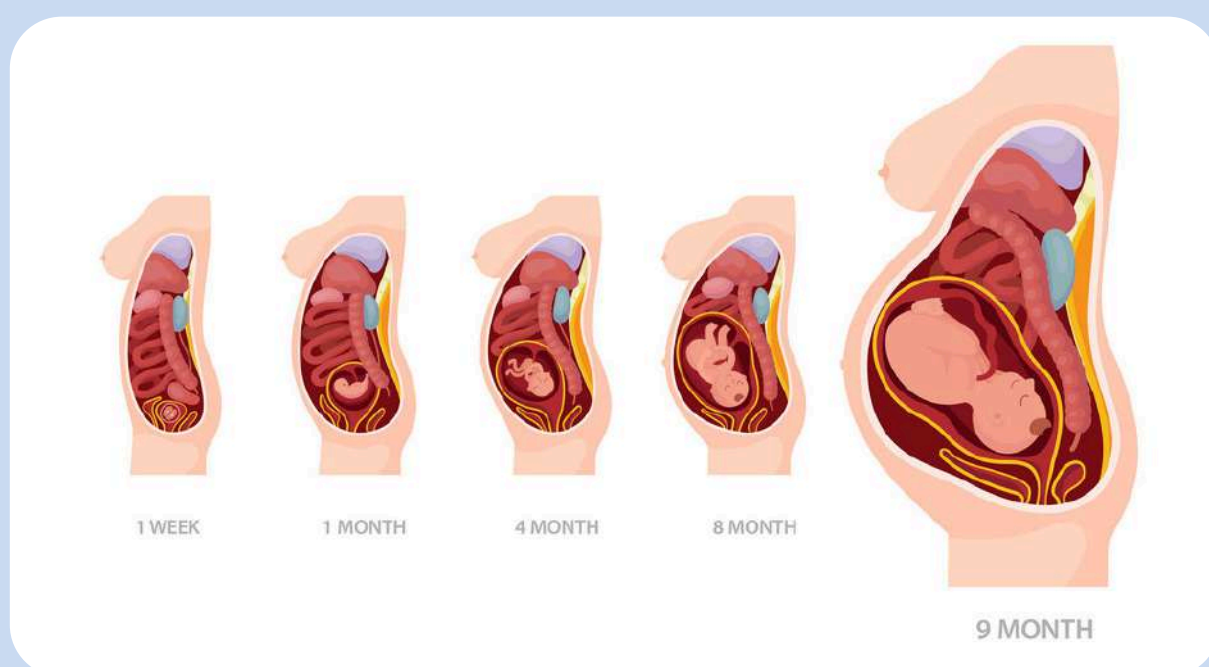
(WEEKS 27-40)

## Week 37-38: Full-Term and Labor Preparation

- **What's Happening to You:** You may begin experiencing the early signs of labor, including more frequent contractions, a lower belly, and the release of the mucus plug. Your cervix may begin to soften and dilate in preparation for labor.
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is considered full-term and is fully developed. The lungs, brain, and organs are mature, and the baby's body is still gaining weight in preparation for birth.

## Week 39-40: It's Time!

- **What's Happening to You:** Labor may begin at any time now. You might experience regular contractions, a water break, or other signs of labor. It's time to head to the hospital when labor begins!
- **What's Happening to Your Baby:** Your baby is ready to be born! They are fully developed and growing stronger every day. Your baby is now just waiting for the right moment to meet you.



# Scans that are vital during pregnancy

Ultrasound has become a routine aspect of prenatal care, offering both obstetricians and expectant mothers valuable insight into the growth and appearance of the unborn baby. From screening for Down syndrome to assessing normal fetal development, estimating the baby's size, and capturing detailed 3D and 4D images, modern ultrasound technology—combined with expert skill—provides comprehensive imaging services throughout pregnancy.



## Ultrasound Scan Services

### **Viability Scan**

Performed vaginally between 6–8 weeks of pregnancy, this scan helps confirm the number of fetuses and whether the pregnancy is developing normally within the uterus.

### **Nuchal Translucency (NT) Scan**

Conducted between 11–14 weeks, the NT scan assesses the risk of Down syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities. Some major fetal anomalies can also be detected at this stage.

### **Anomaly Scan**

This detailed scan, performed between 18–22 weeks, evaluates the fetal anatomy. It helps detect the majority of structural abnormalities in the fetus.

### **Fetal Cardiac Scan (Fetal Echocardiography)**

A specialized scan done between 20–22 weeks to examine the fetal heart and associated blood vessels in detail.

### **Growth Scan / Fetal Well-being Scan**

Usually carried out around 30–32 weeks, this scan assesses fetal growth, amniotic fluid levels, placental position, and overall well-being of the baby.

### **Doppler Ultrasound**

Recommended if there are concerns about fetal growth. It evaluates blood flow in the umbilical cord and fetal vessels to monitor fetal health.

### **Gynecological Pelvic Scans**

Used to detect pelvic abnormalities such as fibroids, ovarian cysts, or other uterine conditions.



### **3D and 4D Scans**

High-resolution imaging offers a more detailed view of fetal and pelvic anatomy, providing enhanced visualization and bonding experiences for parents.

### **Fetal Anomaly Counselling**

Expert counselling to explain fetal anomalies and provide guidance on prenatal screening results and next steps.

### **Invasive Prenatal Diagnostic Procedures**

Specialized procedures including:

- Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS)
- Amniocentesis
- Fetal Blood Sampling



### **Down Syndrome Screening**

Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal abnormality, caused by the presence of an extra copy of chromosome 21. It can result in significant developmental challenges for the baby. Early screening and diagnostic tests are essential to assess the risk and guide further care.



# Physical and Emotional Changes During Pregnancy

Pregnancy brings about significant physical and emotional changes in a woman's body. These changes are essential for the development and growth of your baby and for preparing your body for childbirth. Understanding these changes can help you cope better and enjoy the experience more fully. Here's a detailed look at the key physical and emotional changes you can expect during each trimester.



## PHYSICAL CHANGES:

### First Trimester (Weeks 1-12)

- **Fatigue:** Early in pregnancy, you might feel extremely tired. This is due to hormonal changes, increased blood volume, and the physical demands of early pregnancy. Your body is working hard to nurture your baby, and this often results in feeling exhausted.
- **Morning Sickness:** Nausea, commonly known as morning sickness, affects many women during the first trimester. It can occur at any time of the day and can range from mild queasiness to vomiting. It is caused by hormonal changes, particularly an increase in the hormone hCG.
- **Breast Changes:** Your breasts may feel tender, swollen, or sore as they begin to prepare for breastfeeding. You might also notice darkening of the areolas (the area around the nipple).
- **Frequent Urination:** As your pregnancy progresses, your uterus grows, putting pressure on your bladder. This leads to more frequent urination, especially during the night.
- **Increased Vaginal Discharge:** You may notice an increase in vaginal discharge, which is typically clear or milky. This is normal and helps prevent infections.
- **Food Cravings or Aversions:** Many women experience specific cravings for certain foods, or they may develop aversions to foods they once loved. This is related to hormonal changes in the body.
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## EMOTIONAL CHANGES:

### First Trimester (Weeks 1-12)

- **Mood Swings:** Hormonal fluctuations during early pregnancy can cause mood swings. You may feel happy one moment and tearful the next. It's common to feel more sensitive or emotional, especially with the huge changes your body is undergoing.
- **Stress or Anxiety:** Pregnancy can bring about feelings of anxiety, especially if it's your first pregnancy. Worrying about your health and the baby's well-being is completely normal.
- **Excitement and Overwhelm:** For many women, there is excitement about becoming a mother, but this is also a time when you may feel overwhelmed by the life changes that are about to happen.



## PHYSICAL CHANGES:

### Second Trimester (Weeks 13-26)

- **Increased Energy:** After the initial fatigue of the first trimester, many women feel a burst of energy in the second trimester. Nausea and morning sickness often subside, allowing you to feel better overall.
- **Growing Belly:** As your baby grows, you'll begin to show more. Your belly will expand as your uterus stretches to accommodate your growing baby. You may also notice stretch marks forming around your belly, hips, and breasts.
- **Changes in Skin:** Hormonal changes can affect your skin, causing changes like darkening of the skin around your eyes (mask of pregnancy) or the appearance of a dark line running down your belly (linea nigra). Some women may also develop acne or other skin conditions.
- **Back Pain:** As your belly grows, your posture shifts, which may lead to back pain. Your growing uterus also puts pressure on your spine, leading to discomfort.
- **Leg Cramps and Swelling:** Many women experience leg cramps, particularly at night, and some may notice swelling in the feet, ankles, and hands as the body retains more fluids.
- **Increased Appetite:** As your energy levels rise, you may feel hungrier and have an increased appetite. You may also notice specific food cravings or aversions.



## EMOTIONAL CHANGES

### Second Trimester (Weeks 13-26)

- **Confidence and Comfort:** Many women feel more confident and comfortable during the second trimester. The morning sickness subsides, and the early fears of miscarriage are reduced, leading to a sense of relief.
- **Happiness and Bonding:** This is often a time when you start feeling more connected to your growing baby. Some women may begin feeling their baby move, which creates a deeper emotional bond.
- **Body Image Changes:** With your growing belly, you may feel a mix of excitement and self-consciousness. Some women embrace the changes in their bodies, while others might struggle with feeling uncomfortable or less attractive due to the weight gain and changes.





## PHYSICAL CHANGES:

### Third Trimester (Weeks 27-40)

- **Frequent Bathroom Trips:** As your baby grows and your uterus expands, you may feel increased pressure on your bladder. This results in more frequent trips to the bathroom, especially at night.
- **Shortness of Breath:** As your uterus pushes up against your diaphragm, you may experience difficulty catching your breath. This is particularly common in the later weeks of pregnancy.
- **Swelling and Water Retention:** Swelling, especially in the feet, ankles, and hands, becomes more noticeable in the third trimester. This is due to increased blood volume and fluid retention.
- **Braxton Hicks Contractions:** These are practice contractions that can occur in the third trimester. They are typically irregular and feel like mild cramping. They help your body prepare for labor but are not usually a sign of imminent birth.



- **Heartburn and Indigestion:** As your baby grows, it pushes against your stomach, which can cause heartburn and indigestion. Eating smaller, more frequent meals and avoiding spicy or fatty foods can help manage this.
- **Increased Vaginal Discharge:** You may notice an increase in vaginal discharge, which is a normal part of pregnancy. If you notice a change in color, odor, or consistency, it's important to consult your doctor.
- **Labor Signs:** Toward the end of your pregnancy, you may notice signs that labor is approaching, such as your mucus plug being released, the baby dropping lower into your pelvis, or your cervix starting to dilate.



## EMOTIONAL CHANGES:

### Third Trimester (Weeks 27-40)

- **Excitement and Anticipation:** As your due date nears, you will likely feel a mix of excitement and nervousness about the impending birth. This is a time of great anticipation, as you get ready to meet your baby.
- **Anxiety About Labor:** Many women experience anxiety about the pain and uncertainty of labor. Fear of the unknown is natural, and it's important to talk to your doctor or midwife to address any concerns you have.
- **Nesting Instincts:** Many women feel an intense desire to prepare their home and organize things in anticipation of the baby's arrival. This is known as the "nesting instinct" and can be a mix of excitement and an urge to ensure everything is ready.
- **Mood Swings and Irritability:** As you near the end of pregnancy, your hormones and physical discomforts may lead to mood swings or irritability. It's normal to feel a little more emotional as you approach labor.
- **Stress and Worry:** It's common to feel stress or worry about being a new parent and whether you're ready for the responsibility. It's important to talk with your partner, friends, or family to share your feelings and get support.



## TIPS FOR MANAGING PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL CHANGES

**Rest and Relaxation:** Ensure you get enough rest to help manage fatigue. Try taking short naps during the day or engage in activities that relax you, such as reading, taking a warm bath, or practicing deep breathing.

**Exercise and Stretching:** Light exercise, such as walking or swimming, can help with back pain and boost your mood. Stretching can also ease muscle tension, especially in the back and legs.

**Healthy Eating:** Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein to support your growing baby and manage symptoms like nausea or heartburn. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated and reduce swelling.

**Talk to Your Partner or Support System:** Pregnancy can be an emotional rollercoaster. Don't hesitate to share your feelings with your partner, a friend, or a counselor to help alleviate emotional stress.



**Join Prenatal Classes:** These classes can help reduce anxiety about labor and birth by preparing you with knowledge and skills. They also offer emotional support through group discussions and shared experiences.

## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

# What to Eat During Pregnancy

### 1. Whole Grains and Legumes

#### Why They're Important:

Whole grains and legumes are rich in fiber, iron, and protein, which are essential for pregnancy. They help in preventing constipation, provide sustained energy, and support the baby's growth and development.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Chapati (Whole wheat roti):** Made with whole wheat flour, chapatis are a great source of fiber and iron. Pair them with dals or vegetable curries for a balanced meal.
- **Rice (Brown or white rice):** Brown rice is more nutritious than white rice as it retains the bran layer, making it rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- **Moong dal (Yellow lentils):** Rich in protein, folic acid, and iron, moong dal is gentle on the stomach and can be made into soups or curries.
- **Channa (Chickpeas):** Chickpeas are an excellent source of protein and fiber, and can be made into dishes like channa masala, chickpea salad, or snacks like channa chaat.
- **Rajma (Kidney beans):** A great vegetarian source of protein and fiber, rajma helps keep you full for longer and is rich in iron.

#### How to Include:

You can include these foods as part of your daily meals—chapatis with vegetables, rice with lentils, or chickpeas in curries or salads





## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 2. Dairy Products

#### Why They're Important:

Dairy products are rich in calcium and vitamin D, which are crucial for the development of your baby's bones and teeth. They also provide protein and probiotics for digestive health.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Milk:** The best source of calcium, milk also provides essential nutrients like vitamin D and protein. Drink it plain or make smoothies.
- **Curd (Yogurt):** Rich in calcium and probiotics, curd helps improve digestion and provides a cooling effect. It can be consumed plain, in salads, or as a side with meals.
- **Paneer (Cottage cheese):** A good source of protein and calcium, paneer is versatile and can be added to curries, sandwiches, or eaten as a snack.

#### How to Include:

Start your day with a glass of milk or curd, and include paneer in your lunch or dinner. You can also add a spoonful of yogurt to smoothies.



## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 3. Fruits and Vegetables

#### Why They're Important:

Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. They help in boosting the immune system, promoting digestion, and providing the necessary nutrients for both the mother and the baby.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Spinach (Palak):** Rich in folate (essential for fetal brain development), iron, and calcium, spinach is one of the best vegetables to eat during pregnancy. Cook it in curries, soups, or make a spinach paratha.
- **Sweet Potatoes:** High in beta-carotene, vitamin A, and fiber, sweet potatoes can help improve your immune system and provide energy.
- **Carrots:** Rich in vitamin A, carrots help in the development of your baby's eyes and skin. They can be eaten raw in salads, or cooked in curries.
- **Apples:** Apples are rich in fiber and vitamin C. They help in digestion and can keep you hydrated.
- **Bananas:** Bananas provide potassium and vitamin B6, which are essential for energy and combating pregnancy-related nausea.
- **Citrus Fruits (Oranges, Lemons):** Rich in vitamin C, citrus fruits help boost immunity and improve iron absorption.
- **Guava:** A powerhouse of vitamin C, guava strengthens the immune system and prevents infections.

#### How to Include:

Have a variety of fruits and vegetables as part of your daily meals. You can eat fruits as snacks, add vegetables to your curries, or make fresh vegetable juices.



## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 4. Nuts and Seeds

#### Why They're Important:

Nuts and seeds provide healthy fats, protein, and fiber. They are also rich in vitamins like vitamin E, magnesium, and omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for the baby's brain development and your overall well-being.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Almonds:** Rich in vitamin E, healthy fats, and calcium, almonds help support the growth of the baby and maintain the mother's energy levels. Soak them overnight and consume them the next morning.
- **Walnuts:** High in omega-3 fatty acids, walnuts help in fetal brain development and reduce inflammation in the body.
- **Flaxseeds:** Rich in omega-3 fatty acids and fiber, flaxseeds can help in managing pregnancy-related constipation and improve skin health.
- **Pistachios:** These nuts are rich in iron and protein and can be a great snack option during pregnancy.

#### How to Include:

Snack on almonds, walnuts, and pistachios. You can also sprinkle flaxseeds on your salads, smoothies, or yogurt.





## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 5. Lean Protein Sources

#### Why They're Important:

Protein is crucial for the growth of tissues, including the placenta and baby's organs. It helps in maintaining energy levels and supports the development of muscles, skin, and cells.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Chicken:** A lean source of protein, chicken is rich in vitamins and minerals such as iron and zinc. You can have grilled chicken, chicken curry, or chicken soup.
- **Fish:** Fish like salmon and sardines are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and protein, which are important for the baby's brain development. Ensure the fish is properly cooked to avoid mercury contamination.
- **Eggs:** Packed with protein and essential nutrients like vitamin B12 and folic acid, eggs are a healthy option for pregnant women. Boiled, scrambled, or in curries, they can be enjoyed in various ways.
- **Tofu:** A great plant-based protein source, tofu is versatile and can be used in stir-fries, curries, or as a salad topping.

#### How to Include:

Include chicken, fish, eggs, or tofu in your meals two to three times a week to meet your protein needs.



## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 6. Healthy Fats

#### Why They're Important:

Healthy fats are essential for your baby's brain development, and they help in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E, and K.

#### Foods to Include:

- **Ghee:** A traditional source of healthy fats, ghee is often used in Indian cooking. It is rich in antioxidants and helps in digestion.
- **Coconut Oil:** Rich in medium-chain fatty acids, coconut oil provides energy and helps in fetal brain development.
- **Olive Oil:** Rich in monounsaturated fats, olive oil can be used for cooking or in salad dressings.

#### How to Include:

Use ghee and olive oil for cooking your vegetables, dals, and curries. Add a drizzle of coconut oil to your smoothies or curries for extra flavor.





## INDIAN FOODS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

### 7. Hydration

#### **Why They're Important:**

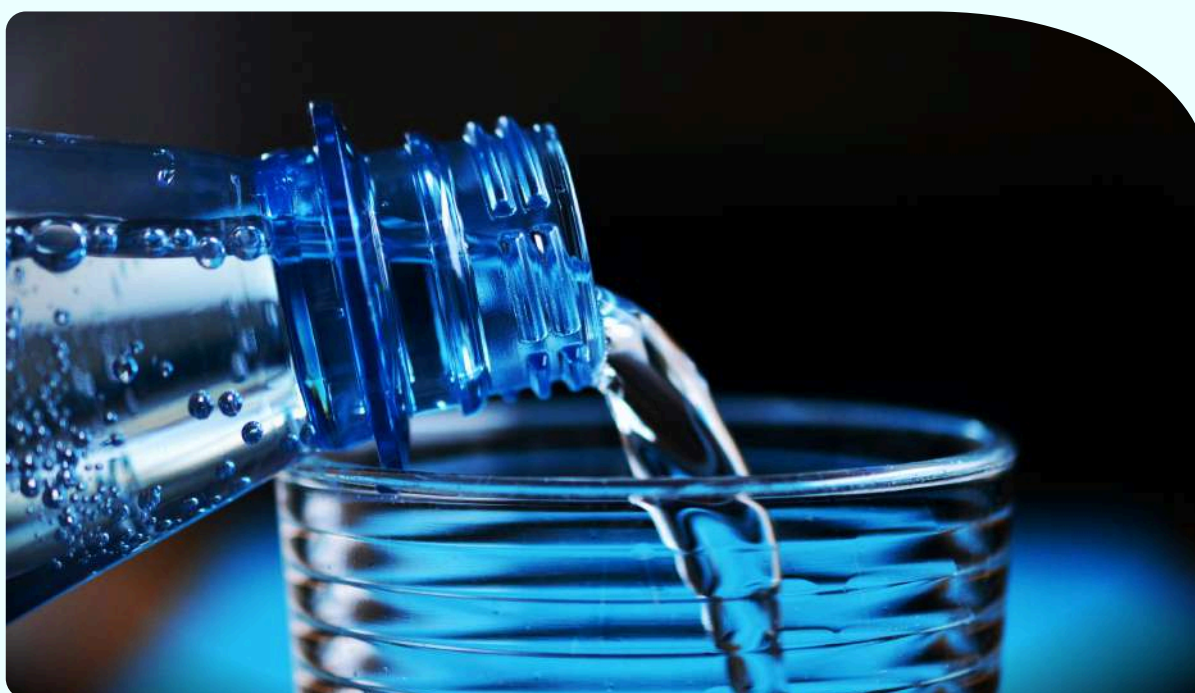
Proper hydration is key to maintaining amniotic fluid levels, supporting increased blood volume, and preventing dehydration.

#### **Foods to Include:**

- **Water:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.
- **Tender Coconut Water:** A natural electrolyte, coconut water helps in maintaining hydration and improves digestion.
- **Fresh Fruit Juices:** Freshly squeezed juices, especially from citrus fruits, help in boosting vitamin C intake.

#### **How to Include:**

Make it a habit to drink water regularly throughout the day. Add tender coconut water as a refreshing drink during your meals.



## FOODS TO AVOID DURING PREGNANCY

- **Raw or Undercooked Meats:** Can carry bacteria or parasites harmful to the baby.
- **Unpasteurized Dairy Products:** May contain harmful bacteria like listeria.
- **Caffeine:** Limit your intake of caffeinated beverages like tea and coffee.
- **High-mercury Fish:** Avoid fish like shark, swordfish, and king mackerel that contain high levels of mercury.



# Safe Exercise and Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

Maintaining an active lifestyle during pregnancy is beneficial for both the mother and the baby. Regular exercise can help improve circulation, reduce stress, maintain a healthy weight, and prepare the body for labor.

However, it's essential to know what exercises are safe and how to relax effectively during pregnancy to support your physical and emotional well-being.

Below are some safe exercise and relaxation techniques that are ideal for pregnant women.

## Walking

Walking is one of the safest and easiest exercises during pregnancy. It helps improve cardiovascular fitness, strengthens bones, and boosts circulation without putting too much strain on the joints.

- Start with short walks, and gradually increase the duration to 30 minutes a day.
- Maintain a comfortable pace and wear supportive shoes.
- Avoid walking in hot and humid conditions.



## Safe Exercise and Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Swimming and Water Aerobics

Swimming provides a full-body workout that is easy on the joints due to the buoyancy of water. It helps relieve swelling, supports cardiovascular health, and tones muscles.

- Swimming laps or joining a water aerobics class can be beneficial.
- Always swim in a clean pool and avoid activities that may cause you to lose balance or become too tired.

### Prenatal Yoga

Prenatal yoga is specifically designed to accommodate the changes your body undergoes during pregnancy. It improves flexibility, strengthens muscles, helps reduce back pain, and promotes relaxation.



## Safe Exercise and Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

How to Do It:

- Join a prenatal yoga class or practice at home [with guidance from a qualified instructor.](#)
- Focus on poses that relieve tension in the lower back, hips, and pelvis.
- Avoid deep twists, poses that require lying on the back for extended periods, and intense stretches.

### Pelvic Floor Exercises (Kegels)

Pelvic floor exercises strengthen the muscles that support the bladder, uterus, and bowels. These exercises are essential for preventing urinary incontinence and improving the ability to push during labor.

How to Do It:

- Squeeze the muscles you use to stop the flow of urine and hold for a few seconds, then relax.
- Repeat 10-15 times, three times a day.



### Stationary Cycling

Cycling on a stationary bike helps improve cardiovascular fitness and strengthens the legs without putting strain on the joints or back.

Tips:

- Ensure the seat is adjusted for comfort, and pedal at a moderate pace.
- Avoid intense cycling and ensure you're comfortable throughout the workout.



## Safe Exercise and Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Strength Training (with Light Weights)

Strength training helps build muscle and supports bone health, which is important as pregnancy increases the risk of muscle loss and bone density changes.

How to Do It:

- Use light weights or resistance bands, and focus on exercises that target your arms, shoulders, and legs.
- Avoid heavy lifting, especially after the first trimester.



### Walking Lunges

Lunges are great for strengthening the legs and improving balance.

How to Do It:

- Step forward with one leg and lower your hips until both knees are bent at a 90-degree angle.
- Alternate legs and perform this move slowly to maintain balance.



### Stretching

Stretching improves flexibility and helps prevent muscle tightness and discomfort.

How to Do It:

- Gently stretch your arms, legs, and back muscles.
- Hold each stretch for 10-15 seconds without bouncing or forcing the stretch.

## Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Deep Breathing

Deep breathing helps reduce stress and anxiety, improves oxygen flow, and helps you relax your muscles.

Tips:

- Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight and shoulders relaxed.
- Close your eyes and inhale deeply through your nose, allowing your belly to expand.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- Repeat this for 5-10 minutes, focusing on each breath.

### Meditation

Benefits: Meditation helps calm the mind, reduces stress, and enhances emotional well-being. It also helps prepare you for labor by focusing on staying calm and centered.

Tips:

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes, and focus on your breath or use a guided meditation app.
- Let go of any distractions and gently bring your focus back to your breath if your mind starts to wander.



## Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This technique helps release muscle tension, improve circulation, and alleviate pain or discomfort, especially in the back, legs, and shoulders.

How to Do It:

- Lie down or sit in a comfortable position.
- Start at your feet and slowly tense the muscles for 5-10 seconds, then relax them.
- Work your way up the body, from your feet to your head, gradually releasing tension in each muscle group.

### Prenatal Massage

Benefits: A prenatal massage can relieve muscle tension, improve circulation, reduce swelling, and provide deep relaxation.

- Schedule a massage with a certified prenatal massage therapist.
- Avoid deep tissue massage or pressure on certain points of the body (like the abdomen) that may trigger premature labor.



## Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Visualization Techniques

Visualization can help you relax and focus on positive outcomes, such as a smooth delivery and a healthy baby.

How to Do It:

- Close your eyes and picture a peaceful, calming environment, such as a beach or a garden.
- Imagine yourself in this environment, feeling relaxed and at ease.
- Visualize yourself during labor, staying calm and strong.



## Relaxation Techniques During Pregnancy

### Aromatherapy

**Benefits:** Certain essential oils, such as lavender, chamomile, and rose, can help promote relaxation, alleviate nausea, and reduce anxiety.

**How to Do It:**

- Use essential oils in a diffuser, or add a few drops to a warm bath.
- Always dilute essential oils with a carrier oil, and consult with your healthcare provider before using any oils during pregnancy.

### Rest and Sleep

Proper rest and sleep are essential for maintaining energy levels, reducing stress, and allowing your body to recover from physical exertion.

- Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night.
- Use pillows to support your body and get into a comfortable sleeping position.
- Take short naps during the day if you feel fatigued.



### Things to Keep in Mind While Exercising During Pregnancy:

**Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise.

**Listen to Your Body:** If you feel dizzy, out of breath, or uncomfortable, stop the exercise and consult with your healthcare provider.

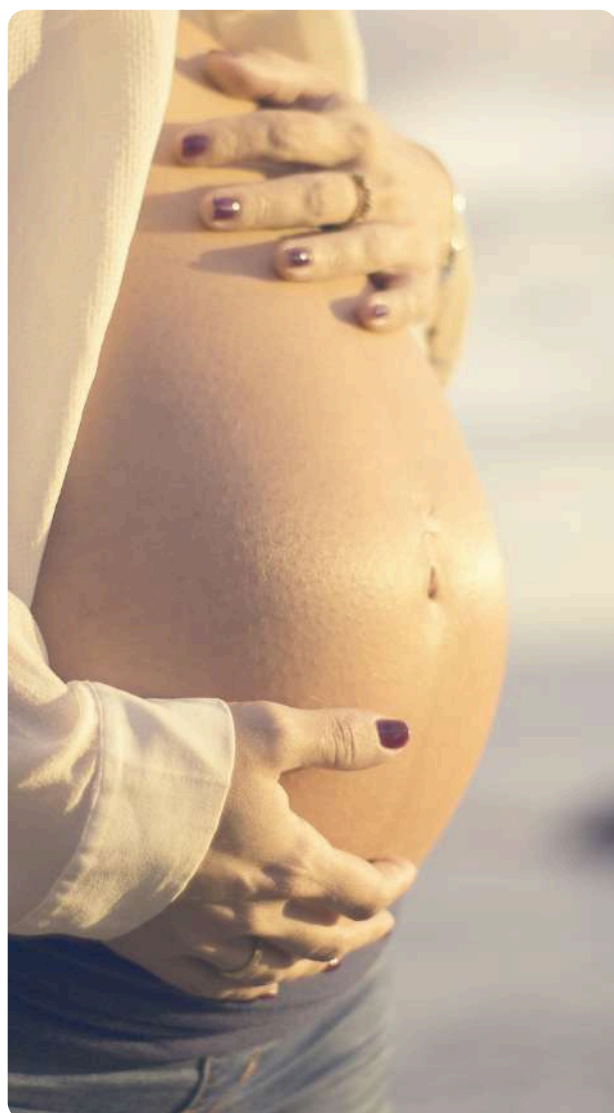
**Avoid High-Risk Activities:** Avoid exercises that increase your risk of falling, such as contact sports, high-impact aerobics, or activities with sudden movements.

**Consult with Your Doctor:** Before starting any new exercise routine, it's important to check with your healthcare provider, especially if you have any complications or concerns.



# Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

Pregnancy is a wonderful experience, but it can come with its fair share of physical discomforts. From nausea to back pain, your body undergoes many changes to accommodate the growing baby, and this can result in some common pregnancy symptoms. While these discomforts are usually temporary, knowing how to manage them can make your pregnancy journey more comfortable. Below are some of the most common discomforts and helpful tips on how to deal with them.



## Morning Sickness (Nausea and Vomiting)

Morning sickness is one of the most common pregnancy symptoms, affecting many women during the first trimester. Despite its name, it can occur at any time of the day. Hormonal changes, especially increased levels of human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), can cause nausea and vomiting.

### How to Deal With It:

- **Eat Small, Frequent Meals:** Eating small meals throughout the day can help keep nausea at bay.
- **Avoid Triggers:** Stay away from strong smells or foods that make you feel nauseous.
- **Ginger and Lemon:** Ginger and lemon are known to alleviate nausea. You can have ginger tea or lemon water.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of fluids, and try to sip water slowly to prevent dehydration.
- **Rest:** Fatigue can worsen nausea, so make sure to get plenty of rest.

## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Fatigue

Feeling tired or exhausted is common in pregnancy, especially during the first and third trimesters. Hormonal fluctuations, the growing demands of your body, and physical changes contribute to fatigue.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Take Short Naps:** If possible, take a short nap during the day to recharge.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- **Stay Active:** Light physical activity, like walking or stretching, can boost your energy levels.
- **Eat Healthy:** A balanced diet rich in iron and protein can help prevent anemia, which can also cause fatigue.

### Back Pain

As your pregnancy progresses, your growing belly and shifting center of gravity can strain your back, causing discomfort. Hormonal changes, extra weight from the baby, and changes in posture can lead to back pain.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Use Proper Posture:** Stand and sit with your back straight, and avoid slouching.
- **Wear Supportive Shoes:** Avoid high heels and wear shoes that provide good arch support.
- **Exercise:** Gentle exercises like prenatal yoga or swimming can strengthen your back muscles and relieve pain.
- **Heat or Cold Therapy:** Apply a warm compress or a cold pack to your back to soothe muscle pain.
- **Prenatal Massage:** A certified prenatal massage therapist can provide relief from back pain.



## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Heartburn and Indigestion

Heartburn is a burning sensation in the chest caused by stomach acid rising into the esophagus. Indigestion can cause bloating, discomfort, and burping. The growing uterus puts pressure on your stomach, and pregnancy hormones relax the muscles of the digestive system, causing acid to move upward.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Eat Small Meals:** Eating smaller, more frequent meals can help prevent heartburn.
- **Avoid Trigger Foods:** Spicy, greasy, or acidic foods can worsen heartburn, so avoid them.
- **Sit Upright After Eating:** Stay upright for at least an hour after eating to prevent acid reflux.
- **Sleep on Your Left Side:** Sleeping on your left side can reduce heartburn during the night.
- **Ginger Tea:** Drinking ginger tea can help soothe indigestion.



### Leg Cramps

Leg cramps, especially at night, are a common pregnancy discomfort. Changes in circulation and pressure from the growing uterus on the blood vessels may contribute to muscle cramps.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Stretch Your Legs:** Stretch your calves before bed and throughout the day.
- **Stay Hydrated:** Dehydration can contribute to cramps, so drink plenty of water.
- **Wear Supportive Shoes:** Choose shoes that provide good support, especially if you're on your feet a lot.
- **Massage:** Gently massage your legs if cramps occur to relieve the tightness.
- **Elevate Your Legs:** Elevating your legs can help improve circulation and reduce cramps.

## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Swelling (Edema)

Swelling, especially in the ankles, feet, and hands, is a common pregnancy symptom. Increased blood volume and pressure from the growing uterus can cause fluid retention.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Elevate Your Feet:** Elevating your feet above your heart can help reduce swelling.
- **Stay Active:** Walking and other light activities can improve circulation and reduce swelling.
- **Avoid Standing for Long Periods:** If you need to stand for long periods, take breaks to sit down and elevate your feet.
- **Wear Comfortable Shoes:** Avoid tight shoes, and opt for sandals or shoes with plenty of room.
- **Drink Plenty of Water:** Staying hydrated helps reduce water retention.



## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Constipation

Constipation is common during pregnancy and can be caused by hormonal changes and pressure on the intestines. Pregnancy hormones slow down the digestive system, making it harder for food to pass through the intestines.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Eat Fiber-Rich Foods:** Foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes can help keep things moving.
- **Drink Plenty of Water:** Staying hydrated helps soften stools and prevent constipation.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Light activities like walking or swimming can help keep your digestive system moving.
- **Consider a Stool Softener:** If needed, your healthcare provider may recommend a safe stool softener during pregnancy.

### Increased Urination

Frequent urination is common during pregnancy, particularly in the early and late stages. The growing uterus puts pressure on the bladder, making it harder to hold urine.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Don't Hold It In:** Urinate when you feel the urge to avoid urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- **Wear Pads:** If leakage occurs, consider using maternity pads for comfort.
- **Limit Caffeine:** Reduce caffeine intake, as it can irritate the bladder.





## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Skin Changes: Stretch Marks and Darkening Skin

Pregnancy hormones can cause changes in skin pigmentation, leading to stretch marks, darkened skin (especially around the belly, nipples, and face), and a “pregnancy glow.” Hormonal fluctuations and skin stretching can cause these changes.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Moisturize:** Use a gentle, hydrating lotion to prevent dryness and improve skin elasticity.
- **Sun Protection:** Protect your skin from the sun by using sunscreen and wearing protective clothing.
- **Embrace the Changes:** While stretch marks and darkened skin may be frustrating, they are common and usually fade after pregnancy.



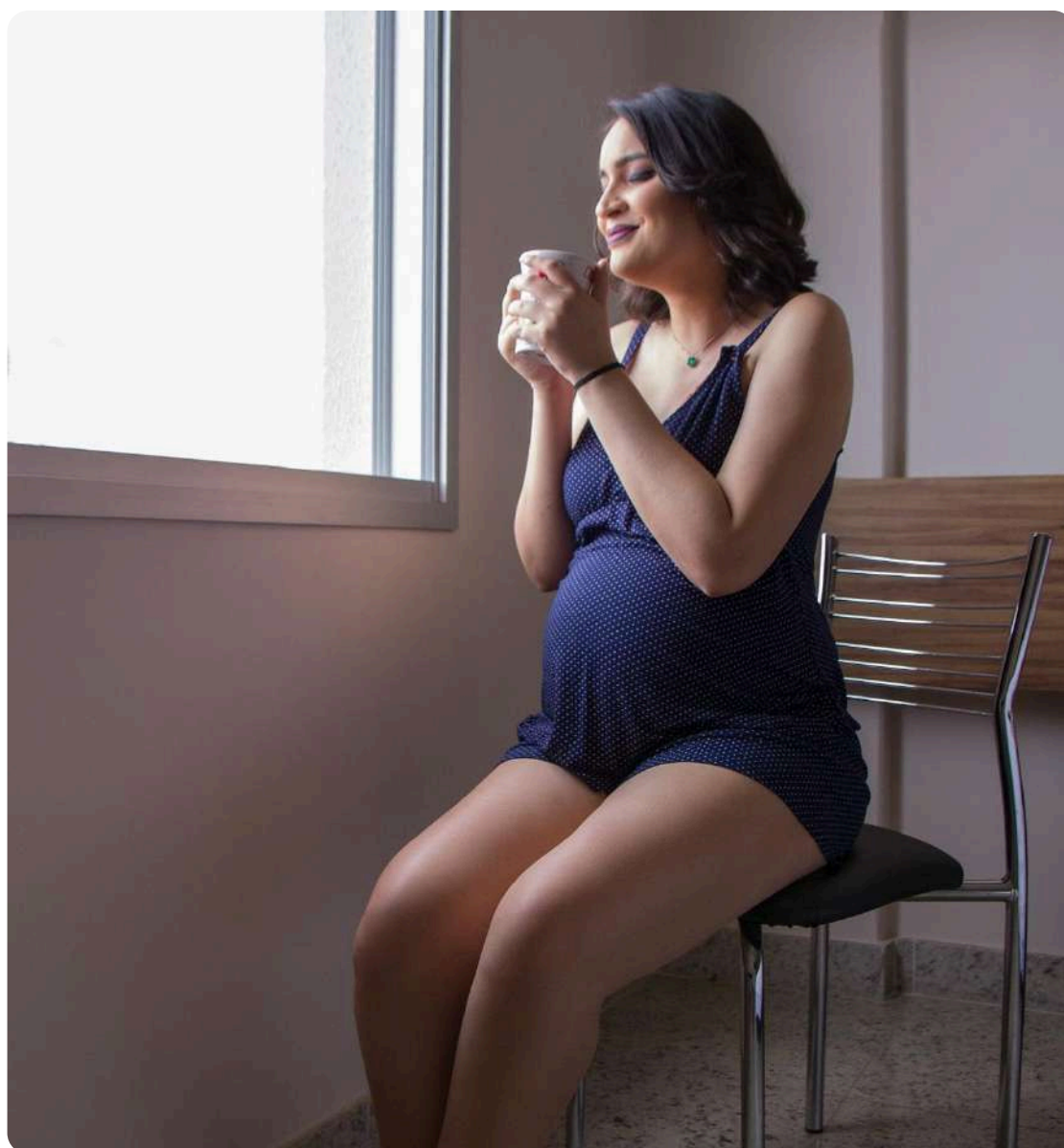
## Common Pregnancy Discomforts and How to Deal With Them

### Mood Swings

Pregnancy hormones can lead to emotional changes, including mood swings, irritability, and occasional tears. Hormonal fluctuations, stress, and physical discomfort can all contribute to emotional shifts.

#### How to Deal With It:

- **Talk About It:** Share your feelings with your partner, family, or a trusted friend.
- **Practice Relaxation Techniques:** Deep breathing, yoga, and meditation can help alleviate stress.
- **Get Enough Rest:** Fatigue can worsen mood swings, so make sure to prioritize sleep.

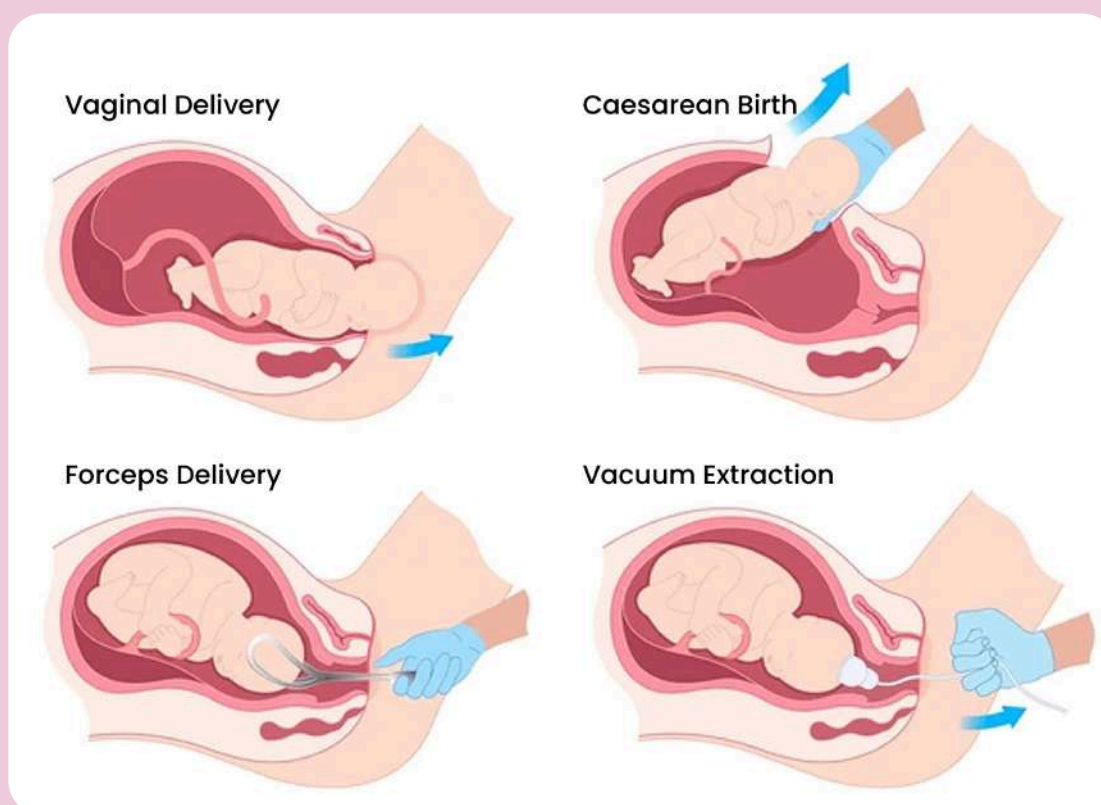


# Preparing for Birth: What You Need to Know

The birth of your baby is an exciting, life-changing event that requires thoughtful preparation. The more informed you are about what to expect and how to get ready, the smoother the experience will be. From understanding your birth options to knowing what to pack for the hospital, this section will guide you through the essential steps for preparing for the big day.

## Your Birth Plan: Vaginal Birth, C-Section, and Your Choices

Creating a birth plan is a helpful way to communicate your preferences to your healthcare team. It's important to remember that a birth plan is flexible and can change depending on how labor progresses. It's best to be open to adjustments while keeping your priorities in mind.

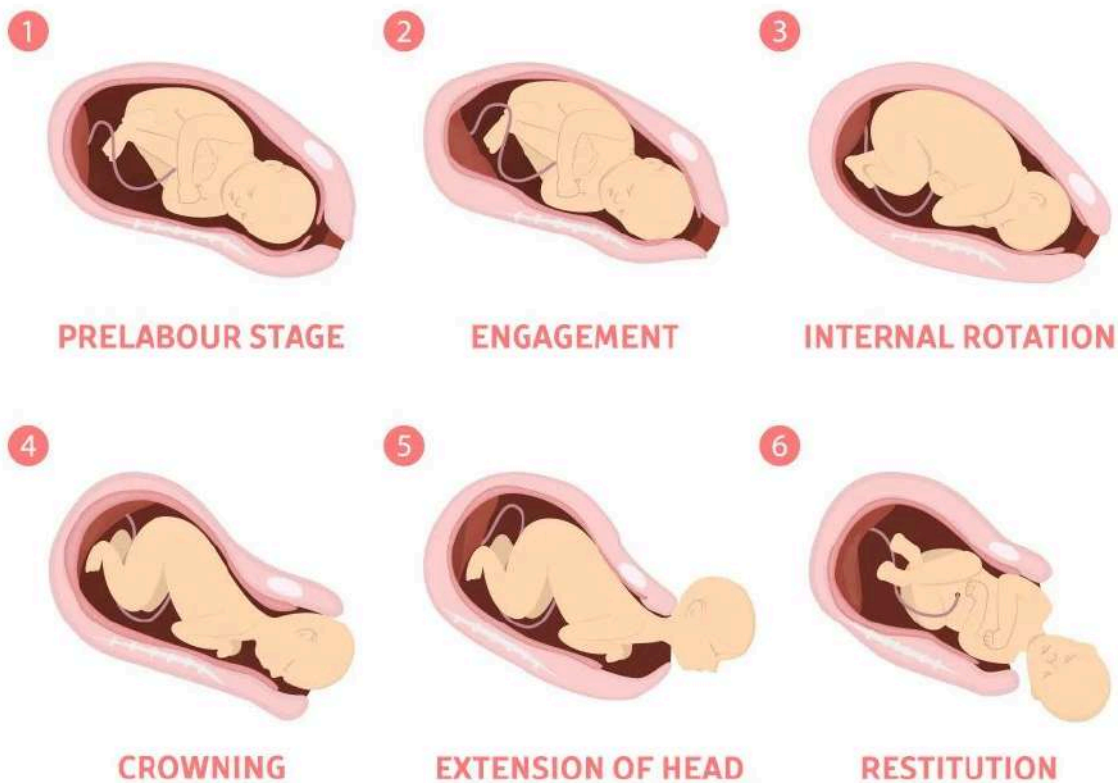


## Vaginal Birth

A vaginal birth is when you deliver your baby through the birth canal. This is the most common type of birth, and it can happen naturally or with medical assistance.

- **Natural Vaginal Birth:** If you want to experience a natural birth, you may choose to avoid pain medication, epidurals, and other interventions unless necessary. This can allow you to move around during labor and recover faster.
- **Assisted Vaginal Birth:** In some cases, tools like forceps or a vacuum may be used to help deliver the baby if labor is prolonged or complications arise.
- **Pain Relief Options:** You can choose from various pain relief options such as an epidural, intravenous pain medications, or even non-medical methods like breathing techniques, water births, and massages.

### STAGES OF BIRTH IN VAGINAL DELIVERY





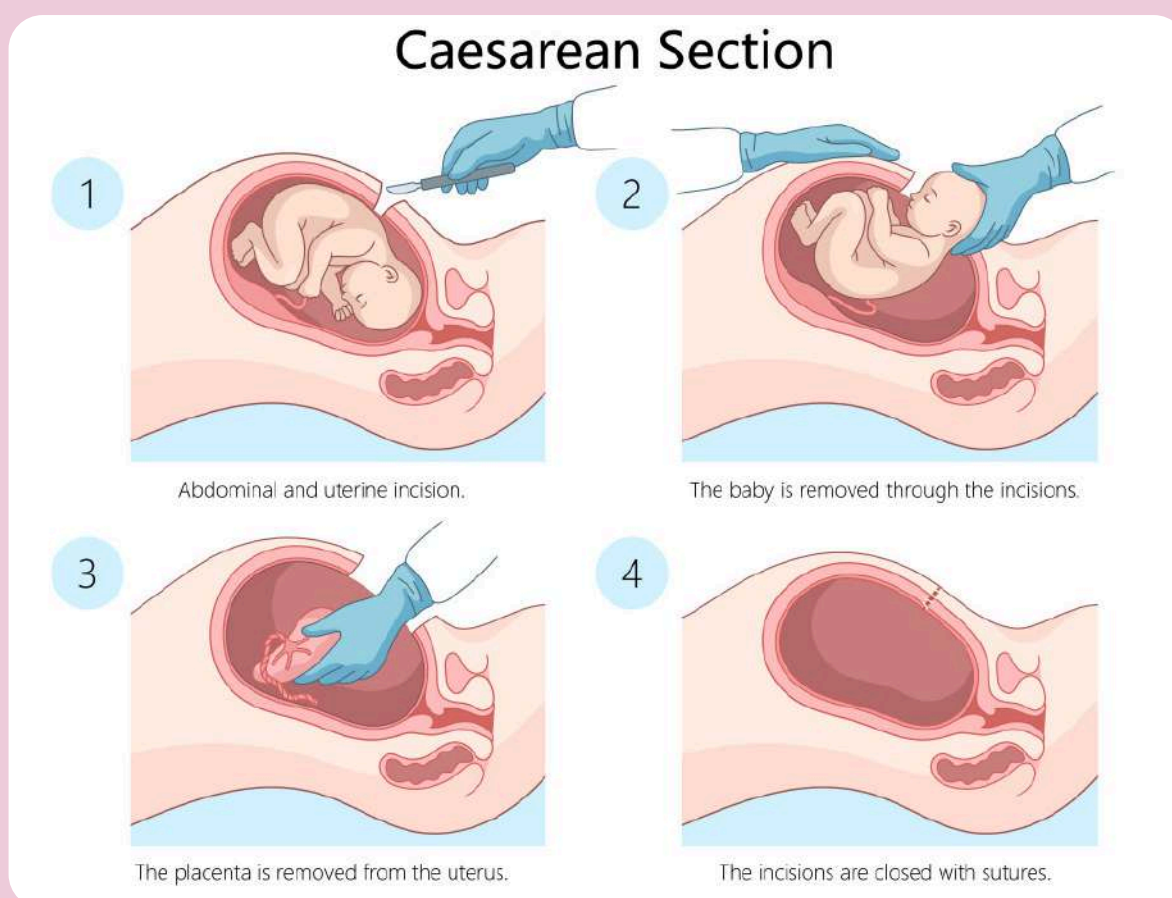
## Preparing for Birth: What You Need to Know

### Cesarean Section (C-Section)

A C-section is a surgical delivery where the baby is born through an incision made in the abdomen and uterus. While vaginal delivery is usually preferred, a C-section may be necessary in certain situations such as:

- The baby is in a breech position.
- Labor is not progressing or there are complications.
- The baby is in distress.
- Multiple births (twins or more).

C-sections are usually planned if there are known medical reasons or can become an emergency decision during labor. Recovery time for a C-section is longer than a vaginal birth, as it involves a surgical incision.





## Preparing for Birth: What You Need to Know

### Making Your Birth Choices

Discuss your preferences with your doctor to understand what's best for you and your baby. Some things to consider in your birth plan include:

- Whether you want to delay clamping the umbilical cord.
- If you want skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth.
- Your preferences for pain relief.
- Your choice of support persons during labor (partner, family members, doula).



## Hospital Bag Checklist and Other Essentials

It's important to be prepared for your hospital stay, especially as your due date approaches. Here's a checklist of items to bring for yourself, your baby, and your birthing team.

### For You

**Comfortable Clothing:** Loose, comfortable clothes for after delivery. Many mothers prefer soft, loose-fitting gowns or robes.

**Toiletries:** Toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo, conditioner, soap, hair ties, and any personal items you use daily.  
**Maternity Pads:** Hospitals provide these, but you may want extras for your comfort.

**Nursing Bras:** Supportive bras designed for breastfeeding, along with nursing pads to absorb any leakage.

**Pain Relief Options:** Whether it's for labor or postpartum recovery, bring any medications, heating pads, or other comfort items you prefer.



## Hospital Bag Checklist and Other Essentials

### For Baby

**Clothing:** A couple of onesies, hats, socks, and soft blankets.

**Diapers and Wipes:** Hospitals provide diapers and wipes, but you can bring your own if you prefer.

**Car Seat:** A car seat is essential for safely bringing your baby home.

**Swaddle Blankets:** To keep your newborn cozy after delivery.



## Hospital Bag Checklist and Other Essentials

### For Your Partner

**Clothing:** -Something comfortable for your partner to change into during the stay.

**Toiletries:** Toothbrush, deodorant, and other personal items.

**Camera or Phone:** To capture those precious first moments with your newborn.

**Cash or Credit Cards:** -For any small purchases, like snacks or items from the hospital gift shop.



Packing your bag early on will save you time and stress when the moment arrives. Be sure to have everything you need to make your hospital stay as comfortable as possible.







# Postpartum Care: Recovery and Your New Beginning

After childbirth, both physical and emotional recovery are important parts of your journey. Understanding what to expect during your postpartum period can help you adjust and feel prepared for the changes ahead.

## Physical Recovery

**Vaginal Birth Recovery:** If you have a vaginal birth, you'll experience vaginal bleeding (lochia), soreness, and possibly stitches if you had a tear or episiotomy. It's normal for this to last up to 6 weeks.

**C-Section Recovery:** For a cesarean section, you'll have an incision to heal, which can take 6-8 weeks. You may experience swelling, tenderness, and soreness around the incision.

**Uterine Contractions:** After childbirth, your uterus contracts to return to its normal size. This process can cause mild cramping, especially when breastfeeding.

## Navigating Breastfeeding Challenges:

As your body adjusts to breastfeeding, it's common to experience challenges such as breast soreness or engorgement. Using correct latch techniques can help minimize discomfort and ensure effective feeding. Don't hesitate to seek guidance from a lactation consultant for support and personalised care.



## Postpartum Care: Recovery and Your New Beginning

### Emotional Health

**Baby Blues:** It's common to feel moody, tearful, and overwhelmed in the first few days after birth due to hormonal changes. This is called "baby blues" and typically lasts for about 2 weeks.

**Postpartum Depression:** If your feelings of sadness and anxiety persist for weeks or become more intense, it may be postpartum depression. Don't hesitate to seek help from your healthcare provider.



### Physical Activity and Exercises:

**Pelvic Floor Exercises (Kegels):** These exercises help strengthen the muscles in your pelvic floor, which can help in recovery after childbirth.

**Gentle Exercise:** Walking and light activities are a great way to start regaining strength and energy. You should avoid strenuous exercise until your doctor gives you the green light.

## Interactive Sections: Journals, Affirmations, and Activities

Creating a mental and emotional space for yourself is just as important as physical preparation. These activities will help you stay positive and focused as you move closer to your due date.

### **Pregnancy Journal**

Keep track of milestones, your emotional journey, and anything that stands out during pregnancy.

Write down your hopes and dreams for your baby, and create a lasting memory of this special time.

### **Affirmations**

Positive affirmations can help you feel empowered and prepared for birth. Some examples:

"I trust my body to bring my baby into the world safely."

"I am strong, capable, and ready to meet my baby."

"I am surrounded by support and love as I begin this new chapter."

### **Visualization**

Imagine the experience of holding your baby for the first time. Visualize a peaceful birth, where you feel in control and supported by your team.



*Happy  
Motherhood!*

## DON'T IGNORE

01

Heavy bleeding with or without cramps



Changes in vision

02

03

Trouble breathing



Severe nausea & vomiting

04

05

No baby movements or fewer than 10 movements in two hours



Abnormal vaginal discharge

06

07

Severe headache



Severe insomnia

08

09

Burning sensation while peeing



Leakage of fluid

10

**Never ignore any of these.**

**If you observe any of these symptoms, immediately call your doctor**



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