

16 – 19 Weeks

answers to your pregnancy questions



16 WEEKS

at 16 weeks of pregnancy:

Your baby is now able to hear sounds, and the digestive system is working. Your baby weighs about five ounces and is about six to seven inches long. The baby has eyelids, ears and an upper lip.

17 WEEKS

at 17 weeks of pregnancy:

Your baby weighs about eight ounces. The skin begins to produce a protective covering called vernix that acts as a waterproof barrier and will eventually completely cover the baby's skin until it is born.

18 WEEKS

at 18 weeks of pregnancy:

Your baby now sleeps and wakes regularly and may be awakened by noises or your movements. Your baby is growing quickly between 17 and 20 weeks so that the proportion of the head to the body more closely resembles that of a newborn. Soft, downy hair starts to cover the baby's body to keep the baby warm inside the womb.

19 WEEKS

at 19 weeks of pregnancy:

If your baby's hand floats to the mouth it may suck its thumb now. This sucking reflex is the one the baby will later depend on for nursing. Movements and turns are stronger now. The bones and spleen are starting to make red blood cells. The arms and legs are now long enough to touch each other.

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Feeling baby's movements the 1st time

The time when you can expect to feel your baby move for the first time is referred to as “quickening” and varies a great deal. For those that have had another child, they may feel movement as early as 16 weeks, however, it is not unusual to not be able to feel the baby's movements until at least 18 weeks of pregnancy or even later. You may notice a “flutter” one day and then not again for several days—Your baby is suspended in amniotic fluid, so you may not be able to feel all movements. You may also experience days where you feel several movements followed by days where you do not. Don't worry—this is due to your baby having very active periods followed by long periods of rest.



Anatomical Survey

Your physician will order an ultrasound evaluation of the baby at an upcoming visit (usually around 20 to 22 weeks of pregnancy). This ultrasound looks at the general anatomy of the baby and is generally referred to as an anatomical survey. During the ultrasound, all the major organ systems will be looked at and fetal growth will be assessed. In many cases, if you choose to find out, the sex of your baby can be determined provided that the position of the baby allows the ultrasound technicians to view the genital region. If the position of the baby does not allow good imaging of certain major organ systems, it may be necessary to have further images taken at a later visit. This will be the last routinely scheduled ultrasound of your pregnancy unless further studies are medically necessary.

TAKE PRECAUTIONS

Use of saunas and hot tubs

The temperatures of saunas and hot tubs may increase your core body temperature. Some studies suggest this may adversely affect the baby's development. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists suggests that pregnant women spend no longer than 10 minutes in a hot tub and avoid submerging their head, arms and shoulders. Pregnant women should spend no longer than 15 minutes in a sauna.

Tanning

Use of tanning beds or over-exposure to the sun is generally discouraged due to increased risk of skin damage and higher incidence of skin cancers for anyone, but there are additional concerns during pregnancy. Just as with saunas or hot tubs, increasing core body temperature should be avoided. During pregnancy, you may develop what is commonly referred to as the “mask of pregnancy.” This refers to dark blotches that appear on the face but usually fade after pregnancy. Sun exposure can make this discoloration of the skin worse. Many physicians approve spray tanning in a well-ventilated area as an alternative.

Hair dyeing

If you choose to color your hair during pregnancy, be sure to wear gloves if applying it yourself and do so in a well-ventilated area. Hair color products commercially available in the United States are free of tar and therefore are acceptable. A slight amount of the dye may be absorbed through the scalp, however there has been no proof that these chemicals cause harm to the baby.

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