



Pregnancy Week-by-Week: The Third Trimester

It's now the final leg of your pregnancy and pretty soon, you'll be holding your brand new baby in your hands. But before that happens, here's what you can expect in the last few weeks before baby arrives.

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Now that you're in your third trimester, you're in the home stretch! Suddenly, it seems that baby's arrival is imminent and you still have so much you've left undone! On top of that you're feeling heavier and slower as the days pass. Here's what's happening to both baby and you.

Week
27

The Seventh Month Swelling feet

As your baby moves into a whole new growth chart, your feet and back are starting to feel it. Dr Arthur Tseng, consultant obstetrician, gynaecologist and urogynaecologist at Gleneagles Medical Centre knows only too well the regular complaints. "While your swollen feet and ankles are protesting the lack of sensible shoes, please put your feet up whenever you can, even at the office!" he says.

Swollen feet are caused primarily by water retention that occurs as your hormone levels change. This happens because your body requires extra fluid to carry oxygen and nutrients to the baby. Elevating your feet encourages blood to flow more easily back to your heart. Icing your swollen feet every now and then may also provide relief.

Don't lessen your water intake though! "Surprisingly, keeping hydrated helps reduce water retention," says Kelly Loi, obstetrician and gynaecologist at the Health & Fertility Centre for Women, at Paragon Medical.

Week 28

Fluttering eyelids

Sweet dreams, tiny angel! Experts believe that babies begin to dream by week 28. There is certainly evidence that baby's eyes open and close, and he sleeps and wakes at regular intervals. The grooves characteristic of the human brain begin to appear as baby's brain tissue develops further.

Also, "pink or reddish-purple stretch marks may be apparent by now, and stretch mark treatments will only help lessen the appearance", says Dr Tseng.

Week 29

Sounds and light

Most babies should be reacting to sound and light by now. Sing a little song, get daddy to talk to your belly or play some music.

Your baby is also packing on the pounds and his nutritional needs are likely to be at their peak.



Despite eating a good deal, "you could be feeling very tired and washed out at this point. Sleeping becomes a problem as trying to find a comfortable position is difficult", says Dr Tseng.

Week 30

Tiredness, weight gain, aches

By this time, it's likely that you've put on a fair bit of weight. "Gaining 450g a week is quite normal during the last trimester as your baby has a final growth spurt before he arrives into the world," says Dr Loi. Gaining somewhere between 1.3kg and 1.8kg in the seventh month is normal and healthy.

In the seventh month, baby's bones have also fully developed although they may still be soft. The central nervous system continues to mature such that it can control body temperature," adds Dr Ong Xiaohui, obstetrician and gynaecologist at Hsuan & Xiaohui OG Clinic at Thomson Medical Centre.

Weight gain is not the only thing getting you down though. According to Dr Tseng, heartburn, back aches and leg pains are all very normal at this point. Fret not, you're almost there!



Week 31

Breathlessness

"As your baby's senses increase, your breathing

space decreases, making you feel even more breathless than before. Try resting semi-inclined in bed to get a good night's sleep!" says Dr Tseng.

Weeks 32 & 33

The Eighth Month Nesting

If you're starting to get nervous about baby's arrival, you're not alone. "A lot of mums may start having pre-delivery jitters and nerves about the upcoming birth! Mums may start 'nesting', to ensure that their home is ready to welcome the new baby. Partners will need to be extra helpful during this time, as mums will be physically and emotionally drained and could do with all the support they can get!" says Dr Tseng.

Week 34

Testicles drop

Dr Tseng tells us that it is during this week that in boys, the testicles descend.

It is also at this time that mum's vision becomes less sharp and she feels less stable. "Deliberate and unhurried movements are useful to reduce the risk of slipping and falling," Dr Tseng adds. Any exercise regimes you choose should be ones which you feel stable doing.

Now that you are eight months pregnant, your baby's lungs are "still not fully developed but the baby starts practicing breathing," says Dr Ong. Also, baby's toenails and fingernails are visible in the eighth month, she tells us.

If you haven't already started talking to baby, now is definitely the time because baby's hearing is fully developed, Dr Loi explains.



**Week
35**

The Need to Pee!

"A rapidly growing brain makes your baby's head weigh more and that means more pressure on mum's bladder. Day and night-time urinary frequency can be very annoying, but mums should not cut down their fluid intake, for fear of a urine infection occurring," says Dr Tseng.

**Week
36**

Getting there

You may be feeling by now like you've been pregnant forever with no respite from the symptoms, but the good news is that once you get through this week, your pregnancy will be full-term and delivery could happen any day.

Babies between 37 and 42 weeks are considered full-term. Those born before and after this period are considered premature and post-term respectively.

**Week
37**

**The Ninth Month
Baby's coming**

"Towards the end of the eighth

month however, you may begin to feel an increased pressure in your lower belly and notice that your baby is gradually dropping. This is called lightening or engagement, and your lungs and stomach will finally get a chance to stretch out a little – breathing and eating should become easier," says Dr Loi.

If your baby hasn't descended, your obstetrician will want to discuss your options on how to handle this, adds Dr Ong.

**Week
38**

Braxton Hicks

"Your baby is now producing surfactant, which will help him take those first breaths easily," says Dr Tseng. "The last two weeks of the month will be used for piling on the kilos," he adds. Braxton-Hicks contractions – which are not true contractions but may feel like a weaker version of them – may become more regular at this time and increase in frequency till you go into labour.

**Week
39**

Nine months!

You are now officially nine months pregnant and baby could come any day now. Life becomes a waiting game filled with anticipation.

At this time, "Baby's movements are very definite, with kicks and jabs felt throughout the day. Many babies actually produce hiccupping movements, which mums recognise," says Dr Tseng.

Although baby has a full head of hair, with locks even up to 3.5cm long, baby's skull bones are not yet fused, "which allows them to overlap as he passes through the birth canal during labour. This is the reason your baby's head may look cone-shaped after birth", explains Dr Loi.

**Week
40**

Hello world!

This week marks the official end of your pregnancy, "although your baby might not have gotten the memo yet!" says Dr Tseng. He adds that it is rare that baby is overdue past the forty-second week, "but the good news is that he will be good and ready to go once delivered." 