**NARTURE:A Caring Companion For Pregnancy**

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Table of Contents

**Week 1: Announcing the happy news of expecting a baby……………………………………**

**Week 2: Spotting in early pregnancy………………………………………………………………**

**Week 3:10 common pregnancy questions………………………………………………………...**

**Week 4: Exercise and early pregnancy**……………………………………………………………..

**Week 5: Do you need to eat more food?...................................................................................**

**Week 6: How much water should I drink each day?................................................................**

**Week 7: Why is my bladder always full?...................................................................................**

**Week 8: Remedies to fight morning sickness……………………………………………………..**

**Week 9: Coping with changing emotions………………………………………………………….**

**Week 10: Which multivitamins do you really need?..............................................................**

**Week 11: Why the umbilical cord is incredible…………………………………………………..**

**Week 12: Relieving constipation during pregnancy…………………………………………….**

**Week 13: Body odour during pregnancy………………………………………………………….**

**Week 14: Your guide to omega-3………………………………………………………………….**

**Week 15: Pregnancy nosebleeds - why do they happen?...................................................**

**Week 15: Pregnancy bleeding……………………………………………………………………..**

**Week 16: What's it like in the womb?...................................................................................**

**Week 17: How can you increase your chances of having a healthy baby?.....................**

**Week 18: Should you ignore or indulge cravings?............................................................**

**Week 19: Serious morning sickness……………………………………………………………**

**Week 20: First trimester scans………………………………………………………………….**

**Week 1:**

**Announcing the happy news of expecting a baby:**

Discovering that you are going to become a mother is an exhilarating experience that brings a surge of emotions, and announcing this news to your loved ones can be one of the most joyous moments in your life. You might choose to reveal the news right after you get a positive pregnancy test, particularly to your partner. Alternatively, you may prefer to relish the moment privately for a little longer before sharing it with others.

It is customary to announce the pregnancy to a broader circle of family and friends after the first trimester, when the risk of miscarriage is lower. You might also decide to disclose the news first to specific people, such as your parents and closest friends, and then wait before informing others, such as colleagues.

If you are searching for creative ways to share the news, here are some ideas:

Tiny Toes:

Surprising your loved ones with a pair of small baby socks is a sweet way to reveal the news and an excellent way to start your baby's clothing collection.

Share the Scan:

Many couples opt to surprise their family and friends with a printout of their first scan tucked inside a card or baby book, providing a first glimpse of the newest member of the family.

Plus One:

For many couples, social media provides a fantastic platform to announce the news far and wide. Check the calendar; are there any upcoming holidays that lend themselves to a photo theme? Christmas, Halloween, or even Valentine's Day are common choices.

news and involve the older brother or sister in the process.

Discussing ways to reveal your pregnancy with your partner can be extremely exciting and is a crucial first step as a parenting team!

**Week 2:**

**Spotting in early pregnancy:**

Bleeding during the early stages of pregnancy can be a cause of concern for expecting mothers. However, it is important to note that spotting is a common occurrence and does not always indicate a miscarriage. In fact, around 25 percent of women experience light bleeding in the first trimester without any complications.

There are various reasons why women may spot or bleed lightly during pregnancy. One possible explanation is implantation bleeding, which is normal and occurs in some women. Another reason is the increased blood flow to the cervix after sex, which can also result in light bleeding.

Cervical polyps, which are benign growths, may also cause bleeding during pregnancy due to increased estrogen levels. In some cases, the cause of spotting is unknown.

If you experience light bleeding or spotting, it is important not to panic. You should contact your healthcare provider immediately, who may perform an examination or other tests to determine the cause. Talking to your healthcare provider can also provide reassurance and help you enjoy the rest of your pregnancy.

**Week 3:**

**10 common pregnancy questions:**

Having lots of questions about pregnancy is completely normal. Here are some quick answers to ten common questions parents-to-be often have.

1. How can I stay healthy?

Keep it simple and look after yourself. Eat well, stay hydrated, get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly (if your healthcare provider gives you the all-clear to) and be sure to attend all scheduled appointments.

1. Is this normal?

Aches and pains may be normal or may signal something is wrong. Fatigue, nausea and frequent urination are, for instance, common during early pregnancy, but frequent urination could also signal a urinary tract infection. When in doubt, get answers from your doctor or midwife. They're always here to help you.

1. What should I eat?

The best diet during pregnancy is full of fresh, unprocessed foods. Avoid anything unpasteurised or undercooked, limit caffeine, and be sure to wash all produce before eating. There's no need to "eat for two" while you're pregnant, but you will need to increase your calorie intake during the third trimester.

1. What exercises are good when I'm pregnant?

Many physical activities can be continued into pregnancy. Great activities include yoga, walking, swimming, and low impact aerobics. As a general rule, you should be able to maintain a conversation while you're working out. Experts recommend 30 minutes of daily exercise.

1. How much weight should I gain?

Every woman is different, and every pregnancy is different too. If you have a healthy body weight for your height at the start of your pregnancy, you should gain about 11-16 kg. You'll gain most of your pregnancy weight after week 20. Speak to your healthcare provider about an appropriate weight gain for you.

1. When will I get to hear my baby's heartbeat?

You'll get to hear your baby's heartbeat at your routine 12-week ultrasound scan. You could also opt for an early ultrasound, but you may have to pay for this privately.

1. When will I start to show?

Most women start to notice their bump between weeks 12 and 16, though it's different for every woman due to fitness level, whether you've had a baby before, your age, etc.

1. When will I feel my baby move?

Your baby will start wriggling and stretching around weeks seven or eight, but you won't feel their movements until sometime between weeks

16-24. If this is your first pregnancy, you might not feel movements until around week 20. If you haven't felt your baby move by week 24, contact your midwife.

1. Can I still have sex?

Sex is safe throughout pregnancy, unless your healthcare provider has specifically advised against it. Having sex during pregnancy won't hurt your baby. In fact, your baby will be unaware of what is happening. It is not uncommon for your sex drive to change while you're pregnant; the same goes for your partner, too.

1. What is labour like?

Labour is different for everyone. Learning about the stages of labour and birth will help you to know what to expect, and you can start to think about preparing for the big day. From practising relaxation techniques to preparing your birthing partner and finding out about pain relief options.There are lots of things you can do over the next nine months to get ready.

Sources: Start4Life; NHS: Common health problems in pregnancy; NHS: Have a healthy diet in pregnancy; NHS: Exercise tips for pregnancy;

NHS: Weight gain in pregnancy; NCT: Pregnancy weight gain; NHS: Your baby's movements;

NHS: Sex in pregnancy

**Week 4:**

**Exercise and early pregnancy**:

Regardless of whether you already exercise or not, pregnancy is a great time to be active and move your body. New to exercise?

If you don't have an exercise routine in place, don't fret. You may find it helpful to ease into a fitness routine now. Getting regular exercise (classed as 150 minutes per week) helps prepare your body for labour, increases your energy levels and improves your mood.

However, you should talk to your healthcare provider before jumping into anything new. They'll discuss what exercises are right for you and your fitness levels, and may recommend light exercise like walking, swimming or yoga.

"What should I avoid?"

If you're already active, whether you can maintain the same fitness routine depends on the risk factors and the type of exercise you normally do. For instance, climbing mountains or running full marathons may need to wait a while.

Activities that could result in a fall, such as skiing, horse riding or windsurfing should be avoided. You should also opt out of contact sports (think rugby or martial arts) while you're pregnant .

Talk to the professionals

If you attend fitness classes, talk to your instructor to check they're trained in prenatal fitness and ask them to advise you on how to adapt your movements. This counts for all types of classes from CrossFit to HIIT, yoga to Pilates.

There are some movements that should be avoided even from the early weeks so it's good to check-in with them as soon as you know you're pregnant.

You'll probably be advised to modify some exercises as your pregnancy progresses, too.

Movements like burpees and press-ups aren't so simple when there's a bump in the way!

Alternatively, you could try seeking out specific prenatal classes (this is also a great way to meet other parents-to-be).

*Sources: NHS: Exercise in pregnancy; Start4Life:*

*Exercising in pregnancy; Tommy's: What kind of exercises can I do during\_pregnancy?;*

**Week 5:**

**Do you need to eat more food?**

Maintaining a healthy and balanced diet during pregnancy is essential for the growth and development of your baby. Consuming a diverse range of fresh and nutritious foods will help you acquire the necessary vitamins and minerals your body requires.

It is often misunderstood that you need to "eat for two" during pregnancy, but this is not the case. While you do require more calories during pregnancy to maintain a healthy weight, doubling your calorie intake is unnecessary. For women who were at a healthy weight before becoming pregnant, there is usually no need to increase calorie intake during the first and second trimesters.

During the third trimester, an additional 200 calories can be added to your diet, equivalent to two slices of bread or two yogurts a day, based on your pregnancy weight gain, activity levels, and your baby's activity level. Your midwife will be able to provide advice on the number of additional calories needed during the final weeks of pregnancy.

Eating a nutritious diet is crucial throughout your pregnancy, with a focus on foods that are high in protein, iron, calcium, and folate. This includes at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, starchy carbohydrates such as wholemeal bread, pasta, cereals, rice, and potatoes, two servings of fish each week (one oily fish such as salmon, sardines or mackerel), protein from meat, poultry, eggs, beans, pulses, and nuts, and low-fat dairy or non-dairy such as milk, cheese, yogurt, soya milk, and nut milks.

**Week 6:**

**How much water should I drink each day?**

According to the Harvard Medical School, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' when it comes to a specific volume of water you should be drinking daily. However, doctors typically recommend between eight and 10 cups of water per day.

Does water impact your body and your baby's development?

The straightforward answer is - yes. Water helps to support your circulatory system, working overtime from the increased blood volume needed for pregnancy. It also maintains your baby's circulation and your amniotic fluid production. Drinking enough water will help to eliminate common pregnancy symptoms such as headaches, cramps, and circulation issues.

Alternative water sources

Drinking water isn't at the top of everyone's list.

But you can consume this powerful substance through food sources, too. Try adding fresh fruit or vegetables to your water, such as a strawberry or cucumber slice. Otherwise, chopping up a few pieces of cucumber or watermelon will help you to feel refreshed and hydrated.

Cut the caffeine

Caffeine can be tempting, especially if you're feeling sluggish or tired. But try limiting your caffeine intake because it can act as a diuretic, which causes your kidneys to flush sodium and water out of your body.

Vegetable soups during the winter or cold tomato gazpachos in warmer weather are two healthy and nutritious meals you could use to increase your hydration and nutrient levels.

**Week 7:**

**Why is my bladder always full?**

Have you noticed that you're peeing more often at the moment - even at night? As you're in the first trimester of pregnancy, here's why.

During early pregnancy, your increased trips to the bathroom are due to a hormone called Human Chronic Gonadotropin (hCG).

hGC causes an increase of blood flow to the kidneys so they can function more efficiently, preparing them for working hard to support both you, and your growing baby. Their super-efficient duties ultimately lead to more bathroom visits as your body gets rid of waste and toxins quicker than before.

Later on in your pregnancy, your growing uterus and the weight of the baby will begin to put pressure on your bladder, leading to a more physical reason for frequent trips to the bathroom.

Keep up the fluids!

It might be tempting to drink less if you know that you'll need to pee during the night, or at an inconvenient time. But this isn't a good idea, as this can lead to dehydration. Ideally you should be aiming for 1.6 litres, or 6-8 glasses of water per day to keep healthy and hydrated, and to support the extra fluids that your baby needs to grow. Your pee should be a pale, clear colour and you should be visiting the bathroom at least 4 times per day.

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Does it hurt to pee?\*\*

An urgency to urinate accompanied with a burning sensation, or even pain, can be signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI). If you experience these symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider straight away. A quick urine test will show if there's an infection present that requires treatment.

**Week 8:**

**Remedies to fight morning sickness:**

You may wake up with it first thing in the morning or encounter it later on in the day. Indeed, that queasy feeling is a tiresome experience and most likely to start in your first trimester. Luckily, most women tend to feel better in their second trimester. If you develop morning sickness, here are some remedies you can try. Just like on a boat?

Consider combating nausea with seasickness bands. They may not work for all women, but they are at least non-invasive. The theory claims that stimulating a pressure point on your wrist decreases nausea. Some women may get relief, even if it only works due to the placebo effect. Having a full stomach may increase your chances of nausea, but an empty tummy also may make you more nauseous. Eating small meals more frequently may be your best bet and may also help quell the uneasiness, especially before getting to work.

The best foods to eat

Stomach friendly foods that typically will keep down easier include gelatin, apple slices and bland foods, such as dry toast and mashed potatoes. If scents bother you, try eating cold food, seeing foods generally do not produce a strong smell in that state.

Honesty is often the best policy

There are ways to cope with morning sickness while on the job. If you have not already shared the news of your condition with your boss, you may want to consider doing so. Your supervisor may be more willing to work with you, if they know what's happening.

In some cases, rearranging your work schedule may help. Consider asking to change your hours to a time of day when you experience less nausea and if you do experience morning sickness, take comfort in the fact, it won't last forever.

**Week 9:**

**Coping with changing emotions:**

Now you're pregnant, what are you most excited about and what are your biggest fears? Does it feel like you jump back and forth between the two from one minute to the next? It's very normal to feel conflicted. Pregnancy and parenting are huge adjustments, and it's typical to have ups and downs. You're entitled to feel both positive and negative emotions that go hand-in-hand with this life-altering change you're experiencing.

Pregnancy can be overwhelming

There's so much planning to do and so many things happening to your body and your life. It's normal to feel scared about the future. Will your baby be healthy? Will you be a good parent?

How will you afford all of your baby's needs?

What if something goes wrong? Almost all parents-to-be have these same thoughts during pregnancy.

You can try to manage some of your anxiety by making positive lifestyle changes. Eating a balanced diet, staying hydrated, and doing daily exercise can improve your emotional well-being.

Consider talking to other pregnant people or friends who already have babies. If you feel comfortable, open up to people who have been through the same experiences as you - for example, pregnancy with an existing medical condition, pregnancy symptoms, or previous pregnancy loss.

Feelings of anxiety or depression shouldn't be discounted

While you may have heard of postnatal depression, depression and anxiety during pregnancy are discussed less. If negative emotions begin to interfere with your everyday life, it's time for some additional help. If, for example, you're experiencing persistent feelings of sadness, sleep disturbances, changes in eating habits, difficulty concentrating, loss of interest in normal activities, or thoughts of guilt, worthlessness, or self-harm, reach out to your healthcare provider. The two most common treatments for mental health issues during pregnancy are talking therapies and medications. However, your healthcare provider will be able to assess which is most suitable for you.

**Week 10**

**Which multivitamins do you really need?**

"Are you taking your prenatal vitamins?" You may find everyone starts asking you this! But, are those daily multivitamins really necessary? Let's find out!

Folic acid and Vitamin D

The current official UK advice is that women should take 400 micrograms of folic acid each day, from before pregnancy up to 12 weeks, and 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily throughout pregnancy and breastfeeding. Folic acid is known to significantly reduce the risks of birth defects, such as spina bifida.

Vitamin D boosts your immune system and aids in bone growth. Did you know that your body makes Vitamin D from sunlight? If you get little sunlight (because you live at a high latitude, wear sunscreen, or keep your skin mostly covered) or if antenatal blood tests show you have low baseline vitamin D levels (which most women do), then you may need some extra vitamin D dally.

Multivitamins

Keep in mind that a multivitamin isn't a replacement for a healthy, well-balanced diet. A 2017 study in the Journal of the American Medical Association confirms an earlier study looking at NHS recommendations in the UK - finding that daily prenatal vitamins didn't make a health difference for most mums and babies - although this may have been as a result of a widely varied diet that didn't need supplementing.

Calcium and iron

During pregnancy you should pay particular attention to your calcium and iron intake, aiming for at least four servings of foods rich in both each day.

Contrary to popular belief, milk and cheese are not the only good sources for calcium. It's also found in dark-green, leafy veggies such as broccoli, spinach, Swiss chard, and kale, as well as low-fat dairy products, fortified cereal and bread.

Good food sources of iron-rich foods are green, leafy vegetables, dried fruit, lean meat and nuts.

Be careful with drinking coffee and tea, as this reduces iron absorption.

Before taking prenatal vitamins, speak to your healthcare provider about which one is right for you.

**Week 11:**

**Why the umbilical cord is incredible**

The umbilical cord connects you and your developing baby. It begins to form around the fourth week of pregnancy and remains an essential part of your baby's development until birth. It's usually about 55cm (22 inches) long. So, how does it work?

Soon after you conceive, cell division goes into overdrive. One layer of cells becomes the placenta while the second layer of cells develops into your baby; the umbilical cord links the two.

The cord attaches your placenta to the centre of your baby's belly. It consists of one vein and two arteries. The vein carries oxygen and other vital nutrients to your baby, while the arteries carry waste from your baby back to your placenta.

Pretty incredible, right?

Towards the end of your pregnancy, your body transfers antibodies to your baby through the umbilical cord. The antibodies help protect your baby from infection for the first few weeks or months after birth.

What happens to it after the birth?

After you give birth, the cord is clamped and cut.

This can be a very special task for your birth partner.

Later on in your pregnancy, your healthcare provider should discuss delayed (optimal) cord clamping with you. This is where your healthcare provider (usually a midwite) waits at least one minute after your baby is born to clamp and cut the cord. However, you can wait up to five minutes. Delayed cord clamping allows the placenta to transfer blood, oxygen and stem cells to your baby.

**Week 12:**

**Relieving constipation during pregnancy**

Your growing uterus and baby can put pressure on your bladder, so you may find yourself needing to pee more often than usual.

However, what happens if you also experience constipation during pregnancy?

Why does constipation happen?

The common signs of constipation are feeling bloated and uncomfortable, with longer times in between bowel movements. During pregnancy, food moves at a slower rate through your digestive tract, allowing your body to increase absorption of nutrients your baby needs. Increased hormone levels can also cause your intestines to become a little sluggish, whilst antenatal vitamins(which often contain iron) can add further to your congested colon.

I'm constipated - what can I do?

Although you can't control your hormone levels, there are several things you can do to help prevent constipation, and ensure you're visiting the bathroom a little more regularly:

* drink plenty of water throughout the day
* eat fiber-filled foods, such as apples, leafy green vegetables and beans
* avoid refined grains and opt for wholemeal instead
* exercise is also a great way to keep things moving; whether you go for a walk or do some other form of light exercise, it can help prevent constipation.

Lastly, don't strain yourself when going to the bathroom. If forced, constipated bowel movements can lead to hemorrhoids, which can worsen through pregnancy, labour and delivery. If you're feeling very uncomfortable and the tips above don't help, talk to your doctor. They might be able to prescribe medication that can get things moving safely. The good news is that constipation will ease after delivery, so the discomfort is relatively short lived.

**Week 13**

**Body odour during pregnancy**

"What is that smell? Is it me? Oh no! It is!" We have all been there, right? Especially during pregnancy. You may be thinking to yourself: "First my skin, then my waistline, now this?"

Whether it is making you self-conscious or even nauseous, who do you talk to about something like this?

It can feel embarrassing, but try not to fret!

Changes to your body odour and even your own sense of smell may be making the problem seem much worse than it actually is. Not many people talk about it, but it is completely normal for your body odour to change as your baby grows.

The hormonal changes of pregnancy, (especially the increase in estradiol), create changes in your own personal signature body odour. This may be due to changes in your skin's pH level or your gut flora, but probably the most pronounced changes would be under your armpits and your genital region. In addition, your basal body temperature and your blood supply both increase during pregnancy, which can lead to increased perspiration.

Experts think that this change in odour has an adaptive advantage. Babies are born with a very highly developed sense of smell and they prefer the smell of their own mum to any other scents. Your odour keeps your baby oriented toward you for food, comfort and safety.

A keen nose, too

In addition to the converted pheromones you are giving off during pregnancy, you also develop a highly attuned sense of smell, (thanks again to that increase in estradiol). Odours you haven't ever noticed before may become prominent and scents you enjoyed before may all of a sudden turn you off.

The good news is that you are probably the only person who notices these changes and while it may be an annoying side effect of being pregnant, it isn't permanent.

Easy steps you could take, if you can't stand it

You could try increasing the frequency of showers and bathing, and consider using an antibacterial soap, together with a fresh clean towel each time. Also, consider washing your hair more often and use a dry shampoo between cleans.

Wear breathable fabrics like cotton or linen, and don't wear the same clothes twice. If the odours linger in your laundry, try adding 1/4 cup of white vinegar to the rinse cycle.

Beware of foods that can cause extra body odours such as garlic, onions, curries, strong spices, red meat, cruciferous veggies (broccoli, cabbage, etc.). Stay well hydrated and eliminate alcohol, caffeine and processed sugars.

If you have tried everything on the list

If body odour continues to be problematic, mention it to your healthcare provider. There is a chance that the odour could be due to an infection, which you will want to have treated to keep you and your baby healthy. If it isn't related to an illness, your doctor may recommend specific products, (including prescription soaps or deodorants), to treat the problem.

**Week 14:**

**Your guide to omega-3**

Omega-3 fatty acids are vital nutrients that we can source from our diet. As they are important for brain, eye and heart health, it's easy to understand the need to eat an omega-3 rich diet when pregnant.

The best sources of omega-3

There are three main types of omega-3 fatty acids. Each one supports your body (and your baby's) in a different way:

* ALA: This is used for energy. It's found in flaxseeds, flaxseed oil, chia seeds, and walnuts. DHA: A vital component of the brain and retinas and particularly important for your baby in the second and third trimester.

Sources include oily fish (salmon, sardines, and mackerel), algae, grass-fed meat, and dairy products.

* EPA: This fights inflammation in the body, and is found in animal products and oily fish.

Safe ways to get enough omega-3 for you and your baby

To support the development of your little one's brain, eyes and nervous system, a daily intake of around 200 milligrams is recommended.

Here's how to boost the levels of omega-3 in your diet:

* Aim to eat oily fish (such as salmon, trout, mackerel or herring) in moderation with a maximum of two portions per week (this is because oily fish can contain low levels of pollutants that can build up in the body);
* Sprinkle flaxseed, walnut or chia seeds on soups, salads and yoghurts;
* Snack on avocado and edamame beans;

Add kidney beans to chilli, stews and soups;

•Eat grass-fed dairy and meat;

* Eggs can be enjoyed in many ways, just ensure they're fully cooked;
* Avoid consumption of larger fish such as shark, swordfish and marlin, as these may contain high levels of mercury;
* Cod liver oil and other fish liver products should also be avoided due to their high vitamin A content;

Talk to your GP or midwife about omega-3 supplements if you're concerned you aren't getting enough in your diet. This can be especially important for vegetarians and vegans who may struggle.

4 important things to know

1. Omega-3 oils aren't the same as cod liver oil, which isn't suitable for mums-to-be.
2. Pregnant mums should always ensure food is cooked thoroughly.
3. Only eat shellfish (mussels, lobster, crab, prawns, scallops, etc) that have been cooked because it kills bacteria that can cause food poisoning.
4. If you make your own sushi at home, freeze the fish for at least four days before using it to kill parasitic worms. However, freezing fish won't remove the risk of listeria.

NHS sources: "Is it safe to eat sushi during. pregnancy?"; Should pregnant and breastfeeding. women avoid some types of fish?; The vegan diet

**Week 15:**

**Pregnancy nosebleeds - why do they happen?**

It's amazing how your body changes during pregnancy. For example, your blood volume increases by about 50%. This increase is needed to move blood through the placenta where your baby can receive oxygen and nutrients.

The side effects of extra blood

While extra blood pumping through your body is a good thing, frequent nosebleeds can be a side effect. When you are pregnant the delicate vessels in your nose may burst more easily due to the extra blood circulating. Although not all pregnant people develop nosebleeds, it is a fairly common condition.

When the mucus membranes in your nose become dry, it also increases your odds of a nosebleed. Chilly weather, colds and allergies can all affect the natural state of the inner nose.

How to lower the risk of a pregnancy nosebleed

If you find that you are prone to nosebleeds while pregnant, here are some simple things you can try to lower your chances of getting one:

* Be gentle when blowing your nose to prevent bursting blood vessels.
* Use a humidifier in your home during the winter months to help moisten the air.
* Use a safe moisturiser on the inside of your nose to keep it from getting too dry.
* Keep the pressure in your nose low by not exercising too vigorously.

In most cases, nosebleeds are nothing to worry about and stop on their own after a few minutes.

If your nosebleeds are frequent, particularly heavy or you have additional symptoms alongside them, then have a chat with your healthcare provider. Sources: NHS: Nosebleeds in pregnancy

**Week 15:**

**Pregnancy bleeding**

It's normal to become concerned if you notice bleeding at any given time during pregnancy. Your first thought may be that you are having a miscarriage. Although it's normal to worry, not all bleeding is caused by the loss of a pregnancy.

Roughly, one-quarter of all women lose some blood at some point during their pregnancy.

Some women may develop infrequent bleeding, or it may be continuous for a few days or longer.

Signs to look for

If bleeding is due to a miscarriage, it often starts off light and becomes progressively heavier and is usually bright red as opposed to brown.

Cramps may also occur. If you experience any of the above symptoms, try to stay calm. It does not mean a miscarriage is inevitable, but anytime you experience bleeding during pregnancy, it's essential you tell your doctor right away.

Try to keep in mind that there are many different possible causes for blood loss during pregnancy, such as irritation of the cervix from a vaginal exam or sex. In some cases, it is even impossible to find a cause, but now is not the time to diagnose yourself. You still need a check-up, even if bleeding has stopped. Your doctor may want to perform an ultrasound and possibly run additional tests to make sure your pregnancy is progressing normally.

**Week 16:**

**What's it like in the womb?**

We often think of babies as such helpless little things, they need us to do everything for them at birth. Less known, is how much babies can actually do before they're even born, because they've actually already developed all sorts of skills in the womb.

Breathing

In the womb, your baby gets oxygen from mum's blood supply through the placenta and umbilical cord and can return carbon dioxide back to mum for removal. But around pregnancy weeks 10 and 11, your little one begins 'breathing in' amniotic fluid. It actually looks more like swallowing, but it helps the lungs to develop. As your pregnancy progresses, the movements become more like actual breathing with the expanding and collapsing of the lungs.

Sense of taste

A baby's nutrients comes through the umbilical cord from mum's circulation. However, your baby can also taste some of the foods you eat through the flavour changes in the amniotic fluid. The taste buds are well developed by 13 to 15 weeks of pregnancy and research has shown that babies prefer sweet flavours. Babies constantly make sucking gestures in the womb, you may even get to see your little on sucking a thumb or finger on ultrasound), and this sucking and swallowing provides practice for breast- or bottle-feeding after birth.

Sense of hearing

Hearing is completely developed between 23 and 27 weeks. Your baby can hear your voice and all the other noises in your environment.

Babies tend to prefer and are calmed by low-frequency sounds, like your heartbeat.

Alternatively, they tend to become startled or bothered by high-frequency noises like an alarm or something clattering to the floor. After birth, your baby will be capable of recognising stories they've been read and music they've listened to.

Even the dog barking would be familiar and wouldn't seem to bother your little one.

Sense of sight

Your baby's vision begins to develop early on in pregnancy, but their eyelids remain shut until somewhere between weeks 22 and 25. The womb is dim but not completely dark and your baby will be able to notice changes in light levels, such as bright sunlight or a flashlight that shines across your belly.

Sense of smell

The flavours in amniotic fluid are closely linked to your little one's developing sense of smell, which falls in line with the sense of taste timeline. After birth, your breasts secrete a scent similar to amniotic fluid, helping your baby to locate their food source using their primed ability to smell.

Sense of touch

The womb keeps babies suspended in a comfortable, warm bubble of water and weightless movement, which calms and cushions them. Even so, the first of the senses to form, (between 3 and 12 weeks), is touch, which as it turns out, is the most developed of all senses in a new-born. As they grow and push more on mum's stretching abdomen, they can begin to feel more sensory stimulation from the outside world.

Even though your baby arrives primed with these attributes at birth, the best environment in the first days of life is one that mimics the womb.

Keep your baby close to you, because your warmth keeps the temperature steady and your voice and heartbeat can soothe as your little one transitions to life on the outside. Keep the lighting dimmed. Keep baby swaddled or tucked in against someone's body. This 4th trimester gives babies the best start to adapt to life on the outside and to begin using all the skills they already possess.

**Week 17**

**How can you increase your chances of having a healthy baby?**

Did you know that about 1 in 33 babies are born with a birth defect? Not all birth defects can be prevented, but you can take steps to increase your chance of having a baby with the best health possible.

Birth defects are structural changes that occur during pregnancy and can affect almost any part of a baby's body. While not all birth defects can be prevented, and many children born with birth defects go on to live full lives, it is important to know that some behaviors before, and during pregnancy can increase your chances of having a healthy baby.

Why do birth defects happen?

Birth defects can happen for many reasons.

Sometimes they are completely unpreventable and can be caused by genetics. However, they can also be caused by environmental factors.

How can I reduce the risk of birth defects?

1. Take Vitamin B9 (also known as folate or folic acid) before conception, and for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Vitamin B9, also known as folic acid, significantly reduces the chances of your baby developing major defects of the brain and spine such as Spina Bifida and Anencephaly during pregnancy. The recommended dose of folic acid for women capable of becoming pregnant is 400 mcg per day. Folate also naturally occurs in dark green leafy vegetables, whole grains and fresh fruits an important part of a pregnancy diet.

1. Avoid alcohol completely

Alcohol use during pregnancy can cause a range of birth defects and developmental disabilities known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) and might increase the risk for miscarriage and stillbirth. Early identification and management can help children and families living with FASDs receive the care and services they need to thrive.

1. Avoid smoking cigarettes, or being exposed to cigarette smoke

Smoking during pregnancy increases the chances of certain birth defects such as cleft lip or cleft palate.

1. Avoid overheating

A high fever or exposure to high temperatures can increase the chance of having a baby with birth defects of the brain and spine, especially in the first trimester. Treat your fever promptly, but only with medication approved for use during pregnancy by your doctor or pharmacist.

1. Check your medications with your doctor

Some medications are harmful to unborn babies and can cause serious birth defects. If you're pregnant or planning a pregnancy, you should not stop taking medication you need (or begin taking new medication) without first talking with your healthcare provider.

1. Attend your prenatal care appointments

It is important to see your doctor throughout your pregnancy, right from the very start. They will carry out the necessary antenatal checks and ensure you are doing the very best for your developing baby. Always trust your instincts when it comes to your health. If you feel that something's not right, contact your doctor immediately and don't be afraid to speak up. Staying healthy throughout pregnancy will help to give your baby the very best start in life! Together, the CDC and Pregnancy+ are committed to raising awareness of pregnancy-related conditions such as birth defects. In the US, January is National Birth Defects Awareness Month. Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Week 18:**

**Should you ignore or indulge cravings?**

If you find yourself suddenly desiring food you once hated, or would kill for a slice or three of salami pizza, you are probably experiencing food cravings. Food cravings are pretty normal during pregnancy and may occur due to the changes in your hormone levels.

When it comes to food cravings, there may be no pattern or reason to what you want. For example, you may crave foods you always loved, or suddenly have a desire for food you never liked. If you're craving healthy foods, you're in good shape. But if your desired food fix is cake and ice-cream, you may have to curb the cravings.

Distraction is the best tactic

Consider taking your mind off cravings by doing something else, such as going for a walk, having a glass of water or chatting with a friend.

Although, in most cases, cravings are normal, there are rare instances where they may indicate a problem.

If you start to crave non-food items, such as chalk, sand or soil, you need to discuss your cravings with your healthcare provider immediately. Craving non-food items is a sign of a rare condition referred to as pica. Doctors are not sure why pica occurs in a small percentage of pregnant women, but an iron deficiency may be a risk factor.

**Week 19:**

**Serious morning sickness**

You may have expected a little nausea during pregnancy, but if you cannot keep food or water down, you are probably experiencing a severe morning sickness called hyperemesis gravidarum.

This may develop because of increased pregnancy hormones and it is a rare condition that affects about one percent of mums-to-be. If you are among the unlucky one percent, you should be aware that severe morning sickness can do more than just make you feel awful, it can be dangerous for both you and your baby.

Women who develop hyperemesis gravidarum may vomit frequently and be constantly nauseous. Continuous vomiting prevents nutrients from being properly absorbed. You are also at a high risk of becoming dehydrated and losing weight.

How do you know if you have hyperemesis gravidarum?

In most cases, vomiting will be persistent, usually several times a day. If you experience severe morning sickness, you should not try to put up with it. Talk to your healthcare provider as soon as possible. You may need immediate treatment, to make sure you are getting enough fluids and nutrition for you and your baby.

**Week 20:**

**First trimester scans**

First trimester scans can be thrilling. Getting a glimpse of your little one through an ultrasound can make your pregnancy seem more factual.

While first trimester scans can be exciting, they can also make you a bit apprehensive. It's normal to worry about whether your baby appears to be developing normally. Usually at some point during your first trimester, your doctor will recommend an ultrasound.

Depending on how many weeks pregnant you are at the time of the ultrasound, the scan may be done either abdominally or through a transvaginal scan.

Finally, exact dates and figures!

An ultrasound in your first trimester is performed to check to see your baby's position in your uterus. An ultrasound can also determine how far along you are, which provides you with a more accurate due date than counting from your last period. Your doctor will be able to see if there is more than one little bundle of joy in there. If you're having multiples, your first trimester scan will confirm how many babies you're expecting.

The best part of the scan is you get to see your baby and hear their heartbeat. You may want to get the tissues ready as the realisation is quite often an emotional experience. The Timeline in this App will show you the milestones of your baby's development.