



Home → Health Topics → Fetal Health and Development

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/fetalhealthanddevelopment.html>

Fetal Health and Development

A normal pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancy.html>] lasts nine months. Each three-month period of pregnancy is called a trimester. During each trimester, the fetus grows and develops. Regular medical checkups [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenatalcare.html>] and prenatal tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenataltesting.html>] are very important. They can:

- Help keep you and your baby healthy
- Spot problems with your baby [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthdefects.html>] (if there are any). In some cases, health care professionals can treat the problem before your baby is born. But even when they cannot, it can still be helpful to know about the problem early on. That gives you time to learn about your baby's condition and prepare for any challenges you may face after the baby is born.
- Prevent problems during delivery [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirthproblems.html>] . For example, if your baby is breech (bottom first or feet first, instead of head first), you may need to have a Cesarean section [<https://medlineplus.gov/cesareandelivery.html>] to avoid complications.

Besides getting medical care, there are other things you can do to keep your baby as healthy as possible. It's important not to drink or smoke [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancyandsubstanceuse.html>] . Try to eat a healthy diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancyandnutrition.html>] and make sure to take care of any health problems you have during pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthproblemsinpregnancy.html>] .

Start Here

- Stages of Pregnancy [<https://womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/youre-pregnant-now-what/stages-pregnancy>] (Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/youre-pregnant-now-what/stages-pregnancy>]
- Your Baby's Development: The First Trimester [<https://familydoctor.org/your-babys-development-the-first-trimester/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
- Your Baby's Development: The Second Trimester [<https://familydoctor.org/your-babys-development-the-second-trimester/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
- Your Baby's Development: The Third Trimester [<https://familydoctor.org/your-babys-development-the-third-trimester/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Prenatal Testing: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/prenataltesting.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/prenataltesting.html>]

Related Issues

- What Are the Risks of Preeclampsia and Eclampsia to the Fetus?
[<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/preeclampsia/conditioninfo/risk-fetus>]
 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/preeclampsia/informacion/riesgos-feto>]

Specifics

- Fetal Growth Restriction [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/intrauterine-growth-restriction/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/retraso-del-crecimiento-intrauterino-es/?adfree=true>]
- Hydrops Fetalis/Erythroblastosis Fetalis [<https://childrenswi.org/medical-care/fetal-concerns-center/conditions/infant-complications/hydrops-fetalis-erythroblastosis-fetalis>] (Children's Hospital and Health System, Inc.)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Fetal Development [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Fetal+Development%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Fetal Diseases [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Fetal+Diseases%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Maternal parity modifies the association of birthweight polygenic score with fetal... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40745191>]
- Article: Thyroid Health and Selenium: The Critical Role of Adequate Intake from... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40732987>]
- Article: Advances in Fetal Surgery: A Narrative Review of Therapeutic Interventions and... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40731766>]
- Fetal Health and Development -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Fetal+Diseases%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Fetal+Development%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/>]
- How to Find Find an Ob-Gyn [<https://www.acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn>]
(American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)
- March of Dimes Foundation [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/>]

Patient Handouts

- Fetal development [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002398.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/002398.htm>]
- Intrauterine growth restriction [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001500.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001500.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Fetal development [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002398.htm>]

Fetal echocardiography [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007340.htm>]

Hydrops fetalis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007308.htm>]

Intrauterine growth restriction [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001500.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Birth Defects [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthdefects.html>]

Birth Weight [<https://medlineplus.gov/birthweight.html>]

Childbirth Problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/childbirthproblems.html>]

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/fetalalcoholspectrumdisorders.html>]

Health Problems in Pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthproblemsinpregnancy.html>]

Pregnancy [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancy.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Fetal Health and Development* is the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/Pages/index.aspx>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English

[<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/fetalhealthanddevelopment.html>] on *Fetal Health and Development*

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies.

MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our [quality guidelines](#)

[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>].

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

