

Excerpt

## Your Ultimate Week-by-Week Pregnancy Guide

### WEEK 17

#### Progress Report

Your baby is growing stronger by the day. You can feel that for yourself, as those first timid flutters become more pronounced pokes from her busy little feet and hands. She can touch her own face, and she may be looking for her thumb to suck.

Your baby is now about 5 inches long, and her body systems are in good working order. Her circulatory system and urinary tract are functioning, and she is inhaling and exhaling amniotic fluid as she learns to breathe. Pink nipples are forming on her chest, and your baby has mammary glands even if she's a he. If your baby is a girl, her ovaries are busy developing tiny follicles. She will have six million eggs or so at this point in your pregnancy, but that number will fall to about 1 million by the time she's born.

If you could see your baby, she'd look long and lanky, with legs not much bigger around than your thumb. Soon, though, she'll start developing a layer of fat to keep her warm after birth. In fact, a newborn weighing about 8 pounds at birth will have over 5 pounds of fat on her body.

#### Your Body

Here are some of the things you may be experiencing this week.

## **Dizziness**

Feeling dizzy when you move from sitting to standing? That's normal. When you stand, it takes a little while for the blood that's been pooling in the lower part of your body to make it's way back up to the upper part of your body. You can reduce dizziness by getting up more slowly. However, if you are so dizzy that it feels like you might lose consciousness, tell your doctor.

## **Feeling your baby move**

Get ready for one of the most exciting parts of pregnancy – feeling your baby move for the first time. Many women can't quite believe they're pregnant until the baby moves, even if they've heard a heartbeat or seen the baby on ultrasound. Your baby's movement is the reward for everything you've gone through so far.

Ordinarily, women start to feel their babies move at about 20 weeks, although this varies. You may feel it as early as 16 weeks or as late as 23 weeks. If you've had a baby before, you're likely to notice it earlier because you've experienced it before. At first, the movement feels like a flutter. Then over the next couple of weeks, the faint flutter turns into stronger movements. At 20 weeks you may wonder if that funny feeling is the baby moving; by about 25 weeks you'll have no doubt that you've got a living being inside you. By 30 weeks, you'll become convinced that your baby has learned how to do somersaults. Later in your pregnancy you can actually see your baby moving just by looking down at your belly.

Your baby has actually been on the move since you were six weeks pregnant, but you didn't feel it because the baby was so small. By about 20 weeks, a baby is large enough to make itself felt.

If you're not noticing any fetal movement, it might be because you're not paying close enough attention. At first, the feelings really are subtle. Take several time-outs during the day to sit still in a quiet place and focus on what you feel. Sometimes it takes real concentration at first.

If you don't feel your baby moving by 22 or 23 weeks, call your doctor. It could be a sign of miscarriage, but it also may well be that you have a baby who simply is not very active. Also, the location of the placenta makes a difference; if the placenta is in the front of the uterus, your baby's movements may be less noticeable. Weight plays a roll, too: Slender women usually feel fetal motion earlier than overweight women.

### **Your aching back: Sacroiliac pain**

Low back pain is very common during pregnancy. Often the pain is centered at something called the sacroiliac joint, which is the place in the lower back where the sacrum bone joins with the hip. You have two of these joints, one on each side. If the tendons of the joint are pushed, pulled, or yanked too much or in the wrong direction, they can become inflamed, causing pain around the hipbone in the back.

Sacroiliac pain is common during pregnancy for several reasons. Because of its location, the sacroiliac joint receives pressure from the growing uterus; that pressure may irritate it. Also, your growing belly may be pulling you forward as you walk or sit, changing your posture and putting unaccustomed pressure on the sacroiliac joint. If you started pregnancy overweight or have gained excess weight since conceiving, you're at higher risk for sacroiliac pain.

For this pain, take acetaminophen. Apply ice alternating with heat, limiting each to 20 minutes and ending with ice. In some cases walking helps relieve the pain; in others, rest is best. Do what feels right for you. It usually fixes itself within a few days.