

Your pregnancy at a glance



Before you get pregnant

- Think about the lifestyle factors that might affect your ability to get pregnant and have a healthy pregnancy (see Chapter 5). This applies to men too. You are more likely to get pregnant if you are both in good health.



- Eat a balanced diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- You should avoid drinking alcohol if you are pregnant or trying to conceive.
- Take exercise.
- If you or your partner take any medication, talk to your doctor about whether it will affect your pregnancy.
- Take 400 micrograms of folic acid a day. This is available to buy from your pharmacy or supermarket. You should continue to

take this until you are 12 weeks pregnant (see page 35).

- If you already have a baby with spina bifida, or if you have coeliac disease, sickle cell disease, diabetes, are obese or take anti-epileptic medicines, ask your GP or midwife for more advice. You will need to take a bigger dose of folic acid that requires a prescription.
- If you have a health condition, for example mental health problems, diabetes or a family history of any inherited diseases, talk to your GP or a specialist before you try to get pregnant.
- Talk to your GP or a healthcare professional if you have any concerns or need support.

- If you smoke, get advice about stopping. You are up to four times more likely to stop smoking successfully with support. Visit www.stopsmokingni.info for further information on the 650+ specialist stop smoking services that are available across Northern Ireland. These free stop smoking services provide nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and are run by specially trained staff who can advise you on the best way to manage your cravings and become smoke free. Services are offered in many GP practices, community pharmacies, HSCT premises, and community and voluntary organisations. They can be set up in workplaces.



0–8 weeks

- As soon as you know you are pregnant, get in touch with a midwife or your GP to organise your antenatal care (see Antenatal care on page 54). Begin to think about where you want your baby to be born (see page 60). A leaflet outlining your choices is available from your midwife and GP.
- Some pregnant women start to feel sick or tired or have other minor physical problems for a few weeks (see page 75).
- Take 10 micrograms of vitamin D per day. This is available to buy from your pharmacy or supermarket. You should continue to take vitamin D throughout your pregnancy and while you are breastfeeding. If you qualify for Healthy Start (you are at least 10 weeks pregnant and in receipt of certain benefits) you will be entitled to Healthy Start vitamins which contain vitamin D and folic acid. If you do not qualify for Healthy Start your midwife may recommend other supplements.
- If you have type 1 or type 2 diabetes or a past history of gestational diabetes, telephone the antenatal clinic for an early appointment as soon as you realise you are pregnant.
- If you are not already taking folic acid supplements, you should start now. If you already have a baby with spina bifida, or if you have coeliac disease, sickle cell disease, diabetes, are obese or take anti-epileptic medicines, ask your GP or midwife for more advice. You will need to take a bigger dose of folic acid that requires a prescription.

8–12 weeks

- You will usually attend your first booking appointment by 12 weeks.
- At the booking appointment, your weight, height and body mass index will be measured. You will be asked about your health and family history as well as about your baby's father's family history. This is to find out if you or your baby are at risk of certain conditions.
- Your hand-held notes and plan of care will be completed.
- You will be offered blood tests for hepatitis B, HIV, syphilis and rubella.



- Your midwife will discuss various tests you will be offered during your pregnancy, one of which is an ultrasound scan to check for abnormalities in your baby (see page 65). You will be offered information about what to expect during pregnancy and how to have a healthy pregnancy. Ask if you are unsure about anything.
- Your midwife will also discuss the whooping cough and flu vaccines which are offered to all pregnant women.
- Your midwife or GP will be able to give you your flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy during flu season.



- You can ask your midwife about your rights at work and the benefits available.
- You will usually be offered an ultrasound scan between eight and 14 weeks. This will check the baby's measurements and give an accurate due date. The scan can also detect some abnormalities and check if you are carrying more than one baby. Your partner can come along to the scan (see Antenatal care on page 54).
- Make a dental appointment. HSC dental care is free during pregnancy and for a year after the birth of your baby.
- Just 12 weeks after conception, your baby is fully formed. It has all its organs, muscles, limbs and bones, and its sex organs are well developed.
- Your baby is already moving about but you cannot feel the movements yet.



12–16 weeks

- Find out about antenatal education (see Antenatal care on page 54).
- Start to think about how you want to feed your baby (see Feeding your baby on page 119).
- Make sure you are wearing a supportive bra. Your breasts will probably increase in size during pregnancy so you need to make sure you are wearing the right sized bra.
- If you have been feeling sick and tired, you will probably start to feel better around this time.
- At 14 weeks, your baby's heartbeat is strong and should be heard using an ultrasound detector.
- Your pregnancy may just be beginning to show. This varies a lot from woman to woman.



16–20 weeks

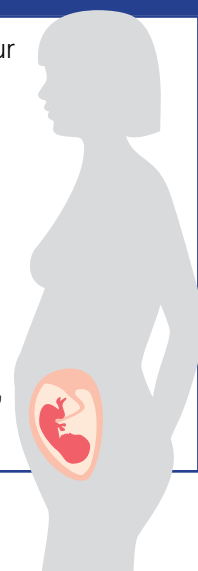
- You may start to feel your baby move (see How your baby develops on page 23).
- Your tummy will begin to get bigger and you will need looser clothes.
- You may feel a surge of energy.
- Try to do your pregnancy exercises regularly (see Your health in pregnancy on page 31).
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - review, discuss and record the results of any screening tests;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein;
 - consider an iron supplement if you are anaemic.
- Your midwife or doctor should give you information about the anomaly scan you will be offered at 18–20 weeks and answer any questions you have.
- Your baby is now growing quickly. Their face becomes much more defined and their hair, eyebrows and eyelashes are beginning to grow.
- Ask your doctor or midwife to let you hear your baby's heartbeat.

20–25 weeks

- Your uterus will begin to get bigger more quickly and you will really begin to look pregnant.
- You may feel hungrier than before. Stick to a sensible balanced diet (see Your health in pregnancy on page 31).
- Ask your midwife about antenatal education (see Antenatal education/parentcraft on page 72).
- You will begin to feel your baby move.
- Get your maternity certificate (form MAT B1) from your doctor or midwife.

25 weeks

- Your baby is now moving around vigorously and responds to touch and sound.
- If this is your first baby, you will have an appointment with your midwife or doctor and they should:
 - check the size of your uterus
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.
- If you are taking maternity leave, inform your employer in writing 15 weeks before the week your baby is due. You can claim for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP).
- If you are entitled to Maternity Allowance, you can claim from when you are 26 weeks pregnant.
- If your partner plans to take paternity leave, they will need to inform their employer.

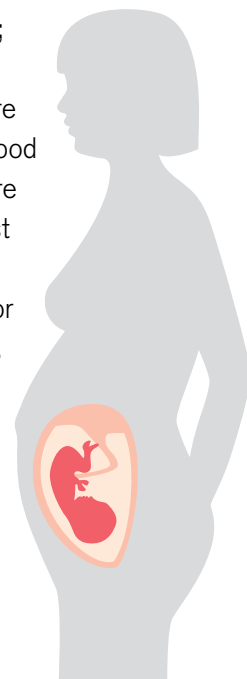


28 weeks

- Your baby will be perfectly formed by now, but still quite small.
- You may find that you are getting more tired.
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - use a tape to measure the size of your uterus;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein;
 - offer more blood screening tests;
 - offer and give you the whooping cough vaccine between 16–32 weeks.
- If you are claiming Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), you must inform your employer at least 28 days before you stop work.
- You can claim a lump sum Sure Start Maternity Grant to help buy things for your first baby if you get one of the following:
 - Income Support;
 - income-based Jobseeker's Allowance;
 - income-related Employment and Support Allowance;
 - Pension Credit;
 - Working Tax Credit where the disability or severe disability element is included in the award;
 - Child Tax Credit payable at a rate higher than the family element.
- Think about what you need for the baby (see What you need for your baby on page 150).
- If you have young children, it's good to talk to them about the new baby.
- Make sure your shoes are comfortable. If you get tired, try to rest with your feet up.

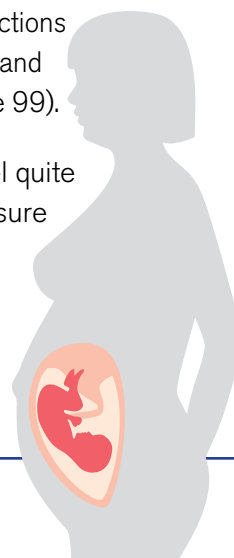
31 weeks

- If this is your first baby, your midwife or doctor should:
 - review, discuss and record the results of any screening tests from the last appointment;
 - measure the size of your uterus and check which way up the baby is;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.



34 weeks

- Your midwife or doctor will give you information about preparing for labour and birth, including how to recognise active labour, ways of coping with pain in labour and developing your birth plan. They should also:
 - review, discuss and record the results of any screening tests from the last appointment;
 - measure the size of your uterus;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.
- Make arrangements for the birth. You can give birth at home, in a midwifery unit or in hospital. If you have children already, you may want to make childcare arrangements for when you go into labour.
- You may want to ask about whether tours of maternity facilities for birth are available.
- Think about who you would like to have with you during labour.
- Get your bag ready if you are planning to give birth in hospital or in a midwifery unit.
- You will probably be attending antenatal classes now (see Antenatal care on page 54).
- You may be more aware of your uterus tightening from time to time. These are mild contractions known as Braxton Hicks contractions (see Labour and birth on page 99).
- You may feel quite tired. Make sure you get plenty of rest.



36 weeks

- Make sure you have all your important telephone numbers handy in case labour starts (see Labour and birth on page 99).
- Your midwife or doctor should give you information about:
 - feeding your baby;
 - caring for your newborn baby;
 - vitamin K and screening tests for your newborn baby;
 - the 'baby blues' and postnatal depression.
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - measure the size of your uterus;
 - check the position of your baby;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.
- Sleeping may be increasingly difficult.

38 weeks

- Most women will go into labour spontaneously between 38 and 42 weeks. Your midwife or doctor should give you information about your options if your pregnancy lasts longer than 41 weeks.
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - measure the size of your uterus;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.
- Call your hospital or midwife at any time if you have any worries about your baby or about labour and birth.

40 weeks

(if this is your first baby)

- Your midwife or doctor should give you more information about what happens if your pregnancy lasts longer than 41 weeks.
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - measure the size of your uterus;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein.



41 weeks

- If your pregnancy lasts longer than 41 weeks, you may be induced. Your midwife or doctor will explain what this means and what the risks are.
- Your midwife or doctor should:
 - measure the size of your uterus;
 - measure your blood pressure and test your urine for protein;
 - offer a membrane sweep (see page 110);
 - discuss your options and choices for induction of labour and provide leaflet of explanation.
- Call your hospital or midwife if you have any worries about your baby or about labour and birth.
- See pha.site/nice-induction-labour for guidelines on induction of labour.

