

Growing Together

24 weeks

Your Baby

Your baby's growth is now focused on getting ready to live outside the womb. If your baby were to be born now, she would have a good chance of survival. About 85% (85 out of 100) of all babies born at 24 weeks survive when they receive proper care.

Even though your baby is growing, her body is still very lean and her skin is wrinkled and red. Her skin looks this way because she does not have much body fat yet and because her blood vessels are so close to the surface.



Your baby now weighs 1 to 1½ pounds. From the top of her head to her rump, your baby is about 8 inches long.

- The skin on her hands and feet has gotten thicker. There are ridges on her palms and soles that form fingerprints and footprints. She can curl her hands into little fists.
- She can hear well. She can make out your voice, even if she cannot understand the words. She can hear your heart beating and your stomach rumbling.
- Her lungs are developing to prepare for breathing. They are filled with amniotic fluid. Even though her chest muscles make breathing movements, she cannot draw air into her lungs. She still receives oxygen through the placenta.
- A fine downy hair, called *lanugo*, grows all over her body. Most of it will be gone by the time she reaches full term.
- Your baby's skin is covered with a natural moisturizer called *vernix*. It looks and feels like cream cheese. Vernix protects her skin from the minerals in the amniotic fluid.

- Your baby swallows amniotic fluid, helping her prepare for sucking and using her digestive system.
- Her eyes are fairly well developed now, but they are still closed.
- Her eyebrows and fingernails are growing.
- She can cry now, but if she were born now, her cries would be weak and shallow.

Changes in You

Now that you are in your 6th month, your weight will increase by about 1 pound a week. Each woman's body is different, so you may gain more or less weight each week. Remember, your baby needs you to eat good, healthy foods to help her keep growing.

- You may see stretch marks on your belly. It is true that stretch marks never fully go away. But they will become less visible after your baby is born.
- Your body starts to produce a hormone called *relaxin*. This helps your pelvis joint relax and open up. It will help spread your hips to prepare for childbirth. After childbirth, your hips will go back to their normal size.
- You may feel the baby kicking strongly now. As she gets bigger, you will notice her movements more and more.
- Your back may hurt. To help with this, wear low-heeled shoes, flats, or good walking shoes. Avoid standing for long periods.
- Now is a good time to begin practicing relaxation. Try to make time for it every day. There is no better way to prepare for labor than to learn ways to help your body relax.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about your baby's growth and your changing body, talk with your healthcare provider at your next clinic visit.