

Growing Together

34 weeks

Your Baby

Your baby's *reflexes* are now more advanced. Reflexes are “built-in” behaviors that help a baby adjust to life outside the womb. Some of these are the startle reflex, grasping reflex, rooting and sucking reflexes, and many others. Rooting and sucking help your baby eat.



Your baby now weighs about 4½ pounds and is about 18½ inches long from head to toe.

- Until your baby is born, his “food” comes through the umbilical cord. Eating will be something new!
- Your baby is practicing sucking in the womb so he will be able to do it right after he is born. But he will have to learn how to put everything together – suck-swallow-breathe, suck-swallow-breathe – to become an expert feeder.
- If your baby is born *prematurely* (before full-term), his sucking and swallowing reflex may be weak.
- The bones on your baby's head are soft and flexible to make it easier for him to fit through the birth canal. But the bones in the rest of his body are hardening.
- In boys, their testicles now descend from up near the kidneys through the groin on their way to the scrotum.
- In girls, the clitoris is easy to see because it is not yet covered by the small labia. That takes place in the last few weeks before birth.

Changes in You

- You may feel more tired these days. Backache may be a problem. Much of this is caused by strain on the ligaments that hold up your uterus. There are exercises that will help relieve this. For some women, a back rub from a partner or friend can help a lot.
- If you are a first-time mom, your baby may start getting into the birth position this week. This means your baby's head will move into your pelvis and start to press on your cervix. This can cause pressure and discomfort down low in your body. Women who have given birth before can expect this to happen just before labor.
- Your feet and ankles may swell a lot, especially in the afternoon and evening and in warm weather. It is important to drink lots of fluids.
- If your hands or face feel swollen and puffy all of a sudden, call your healthcare provider.
- Most couples are starting to think more about labor. This is a good time to talk about a birth plan. Make sure your provider knows your choices for labor and birth (see the "Birth Choices" and "My Birth Plan" chapters in this book).

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.