



Let's talk motherhood

A guide to your second trimester

For HDHP, Standard and High plan members

Adapted from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

GEHA[®]



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Maternity resources

There are numerous books, websites and mobile apps that can guide you throughout your pregnancy. You may feel lost or overwhelmed with so much information. This is normal. We encourage you to speak to your doctor for reference materials that have worked for other patients. Customer reviews for books and apps can be another helpful guidepost. Trust your instincts, see what others have said and talk with your doctor.

Visit forbes.com/Health/Family/Best-Pregnancy-Apps/ for a good overview of the best pregnancy apps of 2022.

Your second trimester, week by week



Week	What is happening
14	The baby can flex its arms and legs and open and close its hands. Eyes start to move, and organs of taste and smell develop. Hair follicles begin to appear.
15	Physical activity increases, as the baby starts moving in the amniotic sac. Kidneys now produce urine. The heart pumps 100 pints of blood daily.
16	External genitals are now visible via ultrasound, along with facial features. The digestive system, including the stomach, now works.
17	On average, the baby is a little more than five inches long and weighs about five ounces. Vernix, a material produced to protect the skin, starts to appear.
18	Noises and movements can wake the baby from sleep. Ovaries containing eggs form in girls, and a boy's testes have begun descension.
19	The baby's movements are more pronounced. Kicks and turns may be felt more easily. If the baby's hand floats to the mouth, they may start sucking their thumb.
20	Meconium, a by-product of digestion, is now being produced. The baby's fingernails start to grow and may eventually need to be trimmed after birth.
21	Fingers and toes are fully formed. Jerking movements felt in the uterus are the baby hiccupping, a common occurrence at this stage.
22	Loud sounds may startle the baby. The eyelids are still shut, but the eyes move rapidly and tear ducts are developing.
23	The baby spends more time in REM sleep, where the eyes move and the brain is very active. The baby can recognize voices and may respond with movement.

Week	What is happening
24	On average, the baby is nearly 12 inches long and weighs slightly more than one pound. The lungs are fully formed but cannot yet work outside of the womb.
25	Period of rapid growth and development, especially in the baby's nervous system. More fat is growing, which will make the baby's skin smoother and less wrinkled.
26	Surfactant, a fluid needed for the baby's lungs to function after birth, is produced. The baby's skin has taken on color because of the melanin now being produced.
27	The baby's heart rate decreases around familiar voices, meaning these sounds are calming. The baby kicks, stretches and makes grasping motions.



Managing physical discomforts

Lower abdominal pain

As your baby develops and your uterus grows, the tissues that support your uterus begin to stretch. This stretching can cause pain in your lower abdomen, which may feel like either a dull ache or a sharp pain. It's usually more noticeable when you cough or sneeze. **If your pain intensifies and/or does not go away after a period of time, contact your doctor.**

Dental changes and oral care

During pregnancy, your gums may become more sensitive when brushing and flossing. Brushing your teeth with fluoride toothpaste, flossing, healthy eating and physical activity are all protective for you and your baby. Hormonal changes may make the gums more reactive to bacteria in the mouth. Spending time on oral care (both at home and with the dental team) to remove plaque may improve oral health. Seeking dental care during pregnancy is safe throughout pregnancy. You may experience excessive saliva, especially when nauseated. This saliva is possibly the result of hormonal changes.

Frequent nausea and vomiting may also lead to tooth erosion or cavities as a result of exposing your teeth to higher-than-normal amounts of acid. To prevent this, do not brush your teeth immediately after vomiting. Wait 20 minutes or rinse your mouth with a cup of water and 1 teaspoon of baking soda.

See your dentist early in your pregnancy for a routine checkup and to discuss any dental or oral health issues you may be experiencing. The second trimester is the best time to go for elective dental treatment.

All GEHA medical members can buy a premium electric toothbrush at a discount.

Visit geha.com/Toothbrush to learn more.

Foot swelling

You may notice that your feet are getting bigger throughout your pregnancy. This can be the result of a few things. First, normal weight gain in pregnancy can lead to larger feet, as can edema, the retention of extra fluid in your body. The hormone relaxin, which your body produces to help loosen the joints around your pelvis, also loosens other ligaments throughout your body, including those in your feet. These loosened ligaments allow your foot bones to spread.

Heartburn

Heartburn is common during pregnancy and may cause discomfort such as an irritation or burning sensation. Pregnancy hormones relax the valve between your stomach and esophagus, creating a burning sensation in the throat and chest. When this valve doesn't close, stomach acids leak into the esophagus. An expanding uterus, pressing against the stomach, compounds the problem.

Hot flashes

Pregnancy hormones and an increased metabolism may make you feel hot when everyone else is comfortable. This is because you are burning more calories, generating more heat. Wear loose clothing, drink lots of water and stay close to a fan, just as you would on a hot summer day.

Dizziness, forgetfulness and strange dreams

You may feel dizzy or light-headed at times. This is a result of changes in blood circulation throughout your body. Move slowly when you stand up, drink lots of fluids and avoid standing for extended periods of time. You may also find it harder to concentrate.

Forgetfulness is normal during pregnancy. Try making lists of workplace tasks and home tasks to help your memory.

Many women experience unusual, vivid or scary dreams during pregnancy. These dreams may offer a way for your mind to cope with fears or anxieties about pregnancy and motherhood.

Changes in your body's circulation may lead to the appearance of spider veins, which are tiny red veins in your legs or face. Spider veins usually go away after pregnancy.

Congestion and nosebleeds

Hormone levels increase during pregnancy and your body makes extra blood. Together, this can cause your nose to swell up, dry out and bleed easily.

Here are some solutions if you get stuffed up or have nosebleeds:

- Try a saline rinse or drops to ease congestion.
- Never use other types of drops, sprays or decongestants without a doctor's permission.
- Drink lots of liquids.
- Run a humidifier at home.
- Rub a small amount of petroleum jelly around the edge of each nostril to keep skin from drying out.



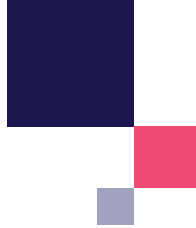
Aches and pains

The extra weight of a developing baby and your changing body will inevitably cause aches and pains. **Be sure to ask your doctor before taking any pain medication.** You may already be taking medicine containing acetaminophen. Ibuprofen or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pain relievers are not recommended because of concerns with birth defects. Instead, try a warm bath or massage when your muscles are sore, or a heating pad on its lowest setting. For mild headaches, lie down with a cool pack or cloth on your head.

LOWER BACK PAIN

It is typical to have back pain during pregnancy, especially at the end of the day. Your expanded uterus changes your center of gravity and weakens abdominal muscles, which can affect your posture. Fortunately, there are several ways to lessen back pain.

- Wear low-heeled shoes with good arch support, such as walking or athletic shoes. Strengthen your back muscles with stretching and exercise.
- Bend at the knees, keeping your back straight, when lifting something low.
- Sit in chairs with good back support or put a small pillow under your lower back.
- Buy an abdominal support garment. This girdle-like belt can be found in maternity stores and takes the weight off the belly and back muscles.
- Use a heating pad on the lowest setting, a warm water bottle or a cold compress to ease the pain.
- Avoid standing for long periods of time. If you must be on your feet for an extended period, put one foot on a box or stool to change posture and reduce back strain.



Nutrition, weight gain, exercise and oral health

Nutrients and prenatal supplements

It is critical to maintain a healthy diet to make sure you and the baby are getting all needed nutrients. It is OK to occasionally give in to food cravings, but it is not healthy to eat only one type of food and neglect the rest of your healthy diet.

Vitamin B and choline are two of the most important nutrients your baby needs. B vitamins provide energy for development, promote good vision and help build the placenta. Choline plays a role in brain development and may help prevent some birth defects. Although your body produces choline naturally, it doesn't produce enough for your baby. Additionally, it may not be found in prenatal supplements.

Make sure your diet includes many foods high in these nutrients, such as:



Chicken is a good source of both vitamin B and choline.



Beef is a good source of choline.



Milk is a good source of both vitamin B and choline.



Whole-grain bread and cereals are good sources of vitamin B.



Beans are a good source of vitamin B.



Eggs are a good source of choline.



Bananas are a good source of vitamin B.



Liver is a good source of vitamin B.



Pork is a good source of vitamin B.



Peanuts are a good source of choline.

Weight gain

Given your pre-pregnancy weight and level of activity, your doctor should be able to predict an approximate total pregnancy weight. Generally, you should gain about one third of your total pregnancy weight around the 20th week of pregnancy. If you gain too much weight too quickly, you will need to adjust how much you eat and exercise more. Some healthy snacks include whole-grain crackers, pretzels and toast or sprouted bread; fruits and vegetables; nuts and seeds; low-fat cheese and yogurt; and fruit smoothies.

In addition to posing a threat of food poisoning, certain fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, albacore and tilefish have high levels of mercury that may be harmful to young children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. It is advised to remove these from your diet completely.

Dietary risks

Pregnant women are just as susceptible to food poisoning as anyone else, but because of the baby, the consequences can be much greater. Avoid food poisoning by washing hands thoroughly after preparing a meal. Avoid raw and undercooked seafood and eggs, wash raw fruits and vegetables before eating. Don't eat cold cuts, deli meats or pickled fish unless they are cooked and steaming hot.

Fish low in mercury, such as shrimp, salmon, pollock, tilapia, catfish and canned light tuna (but not albacore) are a good source of protein, omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients. Strive to eat about two or three servings a week.

Occasionally, pregnant women may develop a strong compulsion to consume non-food substances, such as clay, laundry starch or chalk. This condition is called pica. It is vital to resist these impulses and call your doctor if you develop this urge.

Exercise

WALKING

Walking is one of the easiest and best forms of exercise.

- Invite a friend or family member to join you on your walks.
- Keep track of your progress, increasing the time and distance a little at a time. Seeing how much further you can go each trip can be a great motivator.
- Other alternative exercises that build muscle strength, alleviate stress and get you moving include yoga, Pilates and tai chi.

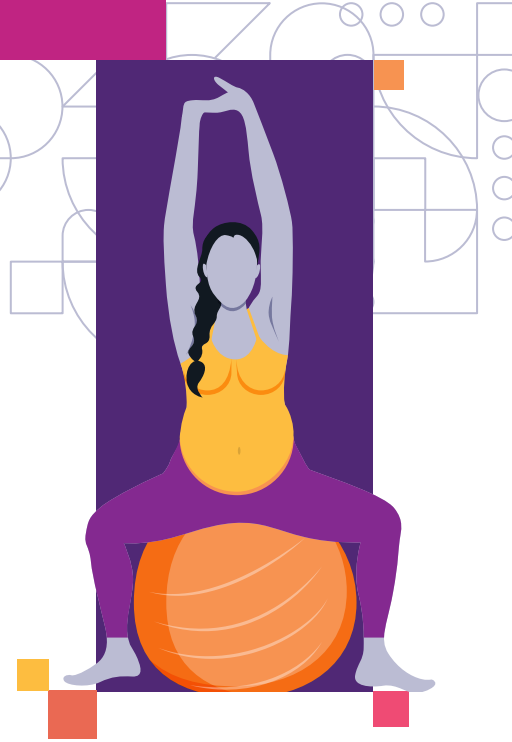


SEATED BALL BALANCE

Another good exercise is the seated ball balance. This will strengthen abdominal muscles and improve balance and stability.

For this exercise:

- Sit on top of an exercise ball with your feet flat on the floor and spine erect.
- Strengthen your abdominal muscles by pretending you are pulling your belly button inward to your spine.
- Relax your arms and tailbone while doing this and breathe normally. Now raise your left foot parallel to the wall and your right arm at shoulder height. Hold this pose for several seconds, then repeat using your right leg and left arm. Repeat four to six times.



Tips for safe exercise

Your growing belly affects your center of gravity and makes you less stable (and more likely to fall). To prevent injury, keep these tips in mind while exercising:

- Drink lots of water.
- Warm up for five minutes before working out to prevent muscle strain. Good warm ups include riding a stationary bike or walking slowly.
- Exercise on a wooden floor or firm surface for greater stability.
- Get up slowly after sitting or lying on the floor. This will help prevent dizziness.
- Avoid exercises that require lying flat on your back after the first trimester. This position can decrease the blood flow to the baby.
- Avoid full sit-ups, deep knee bends, raising and lowering both legs at once and straight-leg toe touches.
- End all exercise sessions with five to 10 minutes of cooling down. Gradually reduce your pace and do some very gentle stretching.

Second trimester considerations



Lifestyle changes to help you and your baby

- The use of alcohol, opioids (prescribed or non-prescription use), illicit drugs or tobacco can have several harmful effects on your baby. It is important to be open and honest with your OB to develop a treatment plan to help safely stop the use of these items. Cigarettes contain lead, tar, nicotine, carbon dioxide and other toxins that go directly to the baby and increase the risk of preterm birth, low birth weight, stillbirth and sudden infant death syndrome.
- E-cigarettes and vaping may seem like a safe alternative to cigarettes, but they still pose health risks to you and your baby. It is not always possible to know the contents or concentration levels of the liquid you are inhaling.
- Secondhand smoke can be just as harmful to the baby as if the mother were smoking, so it is best to remain in a smoke-free environment at all times.
- Alcohol cannot be broken down by the baby's immature liver and can lead to a spectrum of fetal alcohol disorders.
- Recreational drugs such as marijuana can cause health problems in your baby, including lower birth weight and abnormal neurological development.

GET HELP FROM OTHERS

It is typically easier to stop smoking and/or drinking with help from others.

- Tell your doctor so he or she can help you find some appropriate tools.
- GEHA offers **100%** coverage to help you quit smoking. For more on this benefit and other helpful resources, visit geha.com/QuitSmoking

BEWARE OF OPIOID USE

Research revealed that **5%** of pregnant women admitted to taking at least one illegal substance in the last 30 days.

- Researchers have discovered that use of illegal substances may cause preterm birth, interfere with the baby's growth and development, or cause birth defects, learning and/or behavioral problems.

TELL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU ARE ADDICTED

While not all opioid use is illegal, it can still be harmful to you and the baby to take regularly and to stop suddenly. Trying to quit an opioid suddenly can result in preterm labor and other severe consequences for your baby.

- If you are addicted to an opioid like oxycodone or heroin, it is best to tell your doctor, who will help you find a substance abuse treatment program. You should also tell your OB-GYN if you take methadone.
- Opioid use during pregnancy may warrant careful observation of your baby by trained neonatal staff.
- GEHA medical members are eligible for virtual substance-use disorder counseling via MDLIVE¹. For more on this benefit, visit geha.com/MDLIVE



Prenatal care visits

The fourth-month prenatal care visit will be much shorter than in the past. Your doctor will check your weight and blood pressure and may ask for a urine test to look at levels of glucose and protein. Any screening tests for birth defects will occur early in the second trimester. Your doctor will also look at the baby's development and may order an ultrasound to measure the baby's growth.

UTI and vaginal discharge

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) and an increase in vaginal discharge is common during pregnancy. UTIs are caused by bacteria entering the urethra and may result in painful or urgent urination with a strong smell or cloudy color. This can be treated safely with antibiotics.

Clear, sticky or white discharge shouldn't be a concern, but unnaturally colored discharge with a bad odor that causes pain or soreness in the vaginal area can be a sign of infection. Talk to your doctor if you have any vaginal symptoms and wait for their recommendation before taking any medications.

¹ HDHP members who have met their deductible will be charged by MDLIVE, but GEHA will reimburse the member 100% of the Plan Allowance.

Stress reduction

It is natural to worry about what is happening and if you are doing all you can for your baby during pregnancy. It is OK to ask friends and family for help and to find a healthy outlet for stress by venting your feelings or regular exercise. Here are some more ways to reduce stress:

- Ignore that messy house and other chores for a while and do something relaxing.
- Use sick days or vacation when possible. A few hours of afternoon rest at home will go a long way to get you through a rough week.
- Go to bed early. Your body is working hard. You need all the sleep you can get.

Travel

Most travel is safe during pregnancy, but check with your doctor first. Have a prenatal checkup before leaving, and take a copy of your health record with you. Keep travel plans flexible, realizing that pregnancy problems can arise at any time. If possible, consider buying travel insurance to cover nonrefundable tickets and deposits. Wear loose clothes and comfortable shoes, take time to eat regularly and drink plenty of fluids.

If traveling by car, limit driving to no more than six hours each day and stop regularly to stretch, drink and use the bathroom. Air travel is usually safe during pregnancy – air pressure at high altitudes doesn't pose any problems. If there is any hesitancy, talk with your doctor before flying. If you are thinking about taking a cruise, check with the cruise line to make sure they accept pregnant passengers and confirm that a doctor or nurse will be on the ship.

Regardless of how you travel, make sure you know how to find a doctor.

Find a doctor	Resource
Find an in-network provider	geha.com/Find-Care
American Medical Association	doctorfinder.ama-assn.org
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists	acog.org/womens-health/find-an-ob-gyn
The International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers worldwide directory	iamat.org

Keep travel plans flexible, realizing that pregnancy problems can arise at any time.

Sleeping positions

Try not to sleep on your back as the weight of your uterus on your spine and back muscles may decrease blood flow to your baby. The best way to sleep is on your side, knees bent. It may help to put one pillow between your knees and another under your abdomen. You can also try a full-length body pillow for support.

Racing heartbeat

It is normal during pregnancy for your heart to beat faster than usual. This is because your heart is pumping **30% to 50%** more blood at a quicker pace than it normally would. The increased blood flow allows for a more efficient delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the baby. If your heart rate stays elevated or you have shortness of breath, contact your doctor immediately.

Pregnant women are especially sensitive to the effects of caffeine, which can increase heart rate. Limit caffeine to less than 200 milligrams per day.

Prenatal lead exposure

Lead was used commonly in building construction, paint and some ceramic pottery in the United States until the late 1970s. Although heavily regulated now, it can still be inhaled, absorbed or ingested, often without knowing, in certain circumstances. Lead easily crosses the placenta and can lead to miscarriage, low birth rate and preterm birth. For this reason, it is recommended you take a blood test that measures the level of lead in your body.



Preparing for birth

As you enter your second trimester and you have established a relationship with your OB Provider, now would be a great time to tour the hospital you will deliver at. This may be an in-person or virtual tour. It is also a good time to think about a birth plan and discuss options with your provider. Start thinking about how you plan to feed your baby. If you plan to provide breast milk, you can ask about lactation resources that will be available to you at the hospital. Researching pediatricians in your area is also important at this time, so you know who your baby will follow-up with after hospital discharge.

Utilize the GEHA Find Care Tool at geha.com/Find-Care to find a local, in-network pediatrician.

EARLY PRETERM BIRTH

Babies born before 37 weeks are considered preterm, or premature. Babies born before 32 weeks are considered early preterm. Depending on how early your baby is born, your baby may be cared for in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. In the NICU, your baby will be monitored very closely by specially trained providers. If your baby requires the services of the NICU, you can rely on help from GEHA's Maternity and NICU Support Team.

SIGNS OF PRETERM LABOR

Call your doctor immediately if you notice any of these symptoms:

- Vaginal discharge becomes watery, mucus-like or bloody
- Increase in amount of vaginal discharge
- Pelvic pressure or lower-abdominal pressure
- Constant, low, dull backache
- Mild abdominal cramps, with or without diarrhea
- Regular or frequent contractions, often painless (four times every 20 minutes or eight times an hour for more than an hour)
- Ruptured membrane, aka your water breaks (either a gush or a trickle)

Intercourse

In a normal pregnancy, sexual intercourse is permitted until labor. Don't worry, intercourse does not harm the baby. It is natural, though, to experience cramping after intercourse and to find that familiar positions are no longer comfortable. You may want try a position that takes the weight and pressure off your abdomen.

Sometimes the desire for intercourse changes throughout pregnancy. It is OK to have mixed feelings about your body during pregnancy. Some days you may love your growing body. On others, you may wonder if you will ever be the same. Eating a healthy diet and exercising will help improve how you feel.

If there are any complications with your pregnancy or you have a history of pregnancy complications, your doctor may restrict intercourse. It is important to abide by these instructions, but that doesn't mean other forms of intimacy – cuddling, kissing, fondling – are off-limits.

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Preeclampsia

Preeclampsia usually begins after 20 weeks of pregnancy in women whose blood pressure was previously normal. High blood pressure may develop slowly, or it may have a sudden onset. Monitoring your blood pressure is an important part of prenatal care because the first sign of preeclampsia is commonly a rise in blood pressure. It is important to know that if you had high blood pressure before getting pregnant, you are at increased risk for preeclampsia.

Preeclampsia can affect all organs in the mother's body and harm the placenta. It is serious and must be diagnosed and treated promptly.

Symptoms can include:

- Swelling of face or hands
- Unending headache
- Seeing spots or changes in vision
- Pain in upper abdomen or shoulder
- Nausea and vomiting in the second half of pregnancy
- Sudden weight gain
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling "off"
- Regular or frequent contractions, often painless (four times every 20 minutes or eight times an hour for more than an hour)
- Ruptured membrane, aka your water breaks (either a gush or a trickle)

Immunization

The bacteria and germs that cause childhood diseases are still around. In our mobile society, we can easily be around others who come from areas around the world where serious diseases are prevalent.

VACCINATIONS HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DISEASES

Vaccinations help protect others in your community too – like your neighbor who has cancer and cannot get certain vaccines, or your best friend’s newborn baby who is too young to be fully immunized. Each child who isn’t vaccinated can spread germs to others who are unvaccinated.

Immunization	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
HepB (hepatitis B)	Birth	1-2 months	6-18 months		
RV (rotavirus)	2 months	4 months	6 months		
DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis)	2 months	4 months	6 months	15-18 months	4-6 years
Hib (Haemophilus influenza type b)	2 months	4 months	6 months	12-15 months	
PCV (pneumococcus)	2 months	4 months	6 months	12-15 months	
IPV (polio)	2 months	4 months	6-18 months	4-6 years	
MMR (measles, mump and rubella)	12-15 months	4-6 years			
Varicella (chickenpox)	12-15 months	4-6 years			
Hep A (hepatitis A) Given 6 to 18 months apart	12-18 months	12-18 months			
Flu (influenza) Two doses given at least four weeks apart in the first year, one dose yearly after that.	Yearly				

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit cdc.gov



A guide to your second trimester

geha.com/Maternity

[800.821.6136](tel:800.821.6136)

     /gehahealth  /company/gehahealth

Content adapted from *Your Pregnancy and Childbirth Month to Month* by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

This is a brief description of the features of Government Employees Health Association, Inc.'s medical plans. Please read the plan's Federal brochures RI 71-014 (HDHP) and RI 71-006 (Standard and High) at geha.com/PlanBrochure. All benefits are subject to the definitions, limitations and exclusions set forth in the Federal brochure.

The information contained herein is for informational and educational purposes only. This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and if you have questions regarding a medical condition, regimen or treatment, you should always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider. Never disregard or delay seeking medical advice from a qualified medical professional because of information you have read herein.

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