

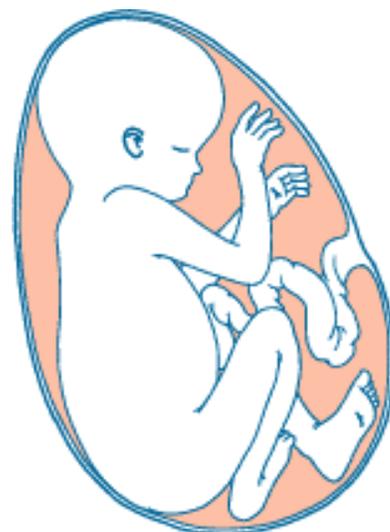
Growing Together

18 to 20 weeks

Your Baby

You are almost halfway there! Your baby is becoming more active, turning from side to side and sometimes head over heels. Finally, you may start to feel your baby move! At first it may be just a flutter, but it slowly gets stronger.

- If you have an ultrasound at this point, you might be able to tell your baby's sex. You might also see your baby kick, flex, reach, roll, or even suck his thumb.
- His chest moves up and down like he is breathing – but he is taking amniotic fluid, not air.
- A protective substance called *myelin* slowly begins to form around the spinal cord.
- A thick, whitish substance called *vernix* begins to coat your baby's skin. This is a natural moisturizer. It protects his skin while he is in a liquid environment.
- He is beginning to have regular sleep and wake periods.
- Sensory development is active at the 20th week. This means taste, smell, hearing, seeing, and touch are developing in special areas in the brain.
- If you are having a girl, the vagina, uterus, and Fallopian tubes are in place. She has about 6 million eggs in her ovaries.
- If you are having a boy, his genitals are fully formed and can be seen.



As you near the end of the 1st half of your pregnancy, your baby will grow from 5½ inches to 6½ inches and weigh almost ½ pound.

Changes in You

The top of your uterus now is near your belly button. You are likely starting to notice other women who are pregnant and little babies around you.

- Your baby's kicking and movement may disturb your sleep. Your growing belly may make it hard for you to get comfortable.
- You may notice your heart is beating faster. This is because you have a lot more blood flowing in your system.
- Sign up for classes to prepare you for childbirth. Now is the time to register so you complete them by 36 weeks. See page 11 of this book for more information.
- Buy some maternity clothes – new or secondhand.

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.