16 to 20 Weeks

First Fetal Movements
The first fetal movements or quickening are usually described as a “fluttering,” or like a butterfly, or tiny bumps or nudges. They may be mistaken for gas pains or hunger pangs. Usually, quickening is felt between 18-22 weeks of pregnancy, but occasionally, as early as 14 weeks.

At this time in your pregnancy, if the baby’s movements are not felt for a day or two, don’t worry. Your baby may have changed position and you simply may not feel the kicks. As long as your provider can hear the baby’s heartbeat, all is well. Later in pregnancy the baby’s movements are more predictable, and we can tell more about how the baby is doing by the perceived activity. For now, enjoy the baby’s tiny movements when you feel them!

Your Body
In these middle months of pregnancy you begin to “show.” Blue jeans and dresses no longer fit. Don’t get discouraged or think that you are fat. You’re pregnant! Your weight gain is important to your baby’s normal growth and development. Discuss with your provider how much weight gain is appropriate for you. Your blood supply will increase from 3 ½ quarts to 5 ½ quarts by the end of your pregnancy. Over the next months you may be less tired and start to enjoy your pregnancy. You may be hungry more often and may feel cravings for some foods. Continue to eat a well-balanced diet and drink at least six to eight glasses of water a day.

Baby’s Growth and Development
At the beginning of the second trimester, your baby weighs about four ounces, and measures about six to seven inches long. If you could see your baby, you would probably recognize his or her gender. The baby’s kidneys make urine, and meconium (the baby’s first stool) begins to collect in the intestines. The fetal muscles are becoming more active, and the movements are more vigorous. Hair begins to grow on the head and downy hair, called lanugo begins to cover the baby’s body. Eyebrows and eyelashes start to grow.

Bleeding Gums
During pregnancy the gums may become red, softened, and more susceptible to bleeding. If bleeding gums do not respond to usual measures of dental hygiene (gently flossing, switching to a soft toothbrush, and using a mild toothpaste) or they become painful or swollen, you should see your dentist. A professional cleaning of your teeth and gums early in pregnancy and perhaps again before you deliver is a good idea. An antiseptic mouthwash such as Listerine keeps your mouth feeling fresh and may reduce the potential for gum infections. A lack of vitamin C in your diet also may contribute to this condition. Vitamin C is best used by your body when taken naturally as part of your daily diet. Good sources include citrus fruit, tomatoes, potatoes with skins, and spinach.

Nasal Congestion & Nose Bleeds
Hormonal changes to the mucus membranes of the nose and sinuses during pregnancy may cause nasal congestion and a feeling like a persistent cold or allergy. There is no specific treatment for stuffiness or allergic rhinitis of pregnancy. Vasoconstrictor nose drops and sprays (e.g. Afrin) should be used sparingly, if at all. They can make the condition worse and also raise your blood pressure.

The tiny blood vessels in your nose may become more congested and are more fragile due to increased hormones. They can break with the slightest strain and cause a nose bleed. Treat your nose gently. Try using a humidifier at night and applying a small amount of petroleum jelly in each nostril or using an over the counter normal saline spray if your nasal tissue becomes dry and crusted.

Work
Most women are able to work throughout pregnancy. If you continue working, take frequent breaks whenever possible.
Avoid standing or sitting for long periods. Consider lying down for an hour when you get home; leave your household chores until after you have rested. This is a good time to enlist your partner’s help.

**Work Hazards**

Some job environments may be potentially harmful to an unborn baby:

- Working with lead or mercury; manufacturing paint, glass, batteries or ceramics; pottery glazing, printing.
- Working around radiation, especially radioisotopes, in an industrial or medical and dental setting.

Talk to your employer if you believe you are at risk.

**Leg Cramps**

Many women experience cramps in their calves and feet, especially at night. When you get a cramp, stand up on a flat surface. Try walking or curling your toes to release the cramp. As the cramp releases, lightly massage and apply local heat where the muscle aches. If the cramp does not release and you have continued pain in your leg, or you experience swelling or redness, see your provider as soon as possible.

Leg cramps may be a sign of insufficient calcium in the diet. Taking two Tums at bedtime will provide additional calcium. Stretching throughout the day can also help prevent cramps.

**Dizziness & Fainting**

Dizziness is not an unusual complaint in pregnancy. Remaining stationary and in one position too long may result in a pooling of blood in the lower body, a decreased return of blood to the heart, a drop in the blood flow to the brain, and feeling of light-headedness and faintness. This is also likely to occur when you change position from lying or sitting to a standing position. A low blood sugar level is another rare cause for feeling light-headed or faint. Always have breakfast; do not go to long between meals; and carry small healthy snacks to relieve the symptoms. High humidity, heat, and dehydration can also produce these symptoms.

Dizziness and faintness can usually be relieved by sitting down with your head down or lying down on your side. When standing for long periods, flex your knees and move your legs frequently to stimulate the circulation; and be careful, move slowly when changing positions. Avoid getting overheated; drink plenty of fluids when in a hot environment.

Actual fainting occurs infrequently; but should it happen, notify your provider.

**Colostrum**

During the second trimester (14 to 27 weeks gestation), a yellowish or whitish fluid called colostrum may leak from the nipples; this is normal due to the hormonal changes of pregnancy. Colostrum, the first breast milk, is a high protein, low-fat substance perfectly suited to the baby’s early dietary requirements. It may continue to leak throughout pregnancy; you may need to wear nursing pads.

**Vaginal Discharge**

Increased blood supply and hormones cause your vagina to increase its normal secretions. The normally acidic atmosphere of the vagina changes too, creating a more fertile setting for yeast infection. Since a whitish vaginal discharge is normal throughout pregnancy, meticulous feminine hygiene is especially important. Keep your panties clean and dry. Cotton panties or at least those with a cotton crotch are better than underpants made of synthetic fiber. If needed, wear a panty-liner. Wash as usual with a bath or shower, but **do not douche**. Report any vaginal discharge that is yellow, greenish, thick and cheesy in appearance, or has a foul odor accompanied by soreness, itching, or burning.

**Weight Gain in Pregnancy**

During pregnancy, weight gain of 15 to 20 pounds is both normal and recommended. Unless your prenatal care provider specifically instructs you otherwise, this is what you should aim for. If you are eating nutritious food, your gain is not fat. Most of this weight gain can be lost within three to six months after you give birth.

For a typical mother who eats wisely during pregnancy, here’s what the recommended weight gain might include:

- Baby 7.5 pounds
- Placenta 1.5 pounds
- Amniotic fluid 2.0 pounds
Breast tissue 1.0 pounds
Uterus 2.5 pounds
Blood 3.5 pounds
Other fluid 2.75 pounds
Other 3.25 pounds

Weeks Gestation: _________________
Weight: _________________________

The goal of our obstetricians and nurse midwives is to provide you with the best prenatal care possible.