Your complete guide to:
a healthy pregnancy
labour and giving birth
life with your new baby
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## Your Pregnancy

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Your pregnancy at a glance

0-8 weeks

- Pregnancy test – you can have one from the first day of a missed period, if you wish (see Finding out, page 26).
- Make an early appointment to see your GP or a midwife if you know you’re pregnant or think you may be (see Finding out, page 26). Begin to think about where you want your baby to be born (see Deciding where to have your baby, page 33). Ask about antenatal care (see Antenatal care and antenatal classes, page 51).
- Some mothers start to feel sick or tired around this time or have other minor physical problems for a few weeks (see Common minor problems, page 77).
- Take a folic acid supplement and try to eat a balanced diet (see pages 8-12).

8-12 weeks

- You’ll probably attend your first antenatal appointment. Appointments will usually be monthly at first (see Antenatal care and antenatal classes, page 51).
- Ask about your rights at work and the benefits available (see Rights and benefits, page 130).
- If you’re on Income Support or income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, you can claim free milk tokens (see Rights and benefits, page 133).
- Make a dental appointment. Dental care is free during pregnancy and for a year after the birth of your baby.

12-16 weeks

- Find out about antenatal classes if you have not already done so (see Antenatal care and antenatal classes, page 51).
- Begin to think about how you want to feed your baby (see The feeding question, page 66).
- Make sure you’re wearing a bra which supports well.
- You may be offered an ultrasound scan which will show your baby moving. Your partner may like to see this too (see Antenatal care and antenatal classes, page 51).
- If you’ve been feeling sick and tired in the early weeks, you will probably start to feel better around this time.
- You may be offered tests to check for abnormalities in the baby (see pages 57-9).
16-20 weeks

- You may start to feel your baby move (see How the baby develops, page 31).
- Your tummy will begin to get bigger and you’ll need looser clothes.
- You may feel a new surge of energy around this time.
- Try to do your pregnancy exercises regularly (see Your health in pregnancy, page 16). Ask your doctor or midwife to let you hear your baby’s heartbeat.

20-24 weeks

- Your womb will begin to enlarge more rapidly and you’ll really begin to look pregnant.
- You may feel hungrier than before. Stick to a sensible balanced diet (see Your health in pregnancy, page 8).
- Make sure you’ve booked into antenatal classes if you wish to attend (see pages 64-5).

24-28 weeks

- Get your maternity certificate, form MAT B1, from your doctor or midwife (see Rights and benefits, pages 130-40).
- If you’re taking maternity leave, inform your employer in writing at least three weeks before you stop work (see Rights and benefits, page 137).
- If you’re claiming Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), write to your employer at least three weeks before you stop work (see Rights and benefits, pages 135-136).
- If you’re claiming Maternity Allowance, do so as soon as you can after you are 26 weeks pregnant (see Rights and benefits, pages 134-5).
28-32 weeks

- If you’re on Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance or Working Families’ Tax Credit, you can claim a lump sum Sure Start Grant to help buy things for your new baby (see Rights and benefits, pages 131-2).

- Think about what you need for the baby, if you have not already done so (see What you need for the baby, pages 85-8).

- If you have young children, spend time getting them used to the idea of a new baby.

- Check that your shoes are comfortable. If you get tired, try to rest with your feet above the level of your heart.

- You’ll probably now attend for antenatal care every fortnight.

32-36 weeks

- Make arrangements for the birth, in hospital or at home. If you have children already, decide who will look after them.

- Pack your bag ready for the hospital, or make sure that you have been provided with a home delivery pack.

- You’ll probably be attending antenatal classes now (see Antenatal care and antenatal classes, page 51).

- You may be more aware of your womb tightening from time to time. These are mild contractions (see Labour and birth, page 90).

- You may feel quite tired. Make sure you get plenty of rest.

36 weeks onwards

- You’ll probably be attending antenatal care weekly until your baby is born.

- Make sure you have all important telephone numbers handy in case labour starts (see Labour and birth, page 89).

- The last few weeks can seem very long. Plan some interesting things to do to take your mind off waiting.

- Telephone your hospital or midwife if you have any worries about labour or the birth.
Introduction

Every parent is different, just as every baby is different. So there can't be many rules to having a baby. But you will find a lot of information in these pages which should help you to decide what you will do, how you will cope and, most of all, how you can best enjoy both pregnancy and your baby.

Chapter 1 is about what you can do to make sure you and your baby stay healthy during your pregnancy. The book then takes you through pregnancy, birth and the first two weeks of caring for your baby. You may want to read some chapters several times, or look up specific things which interest or concern you. To find a topic quickly, just look at the index at the back of the book.

If there is anything which puzzles you, or if you need further explanation, don't hesitate to ask your doctor, midwife or health visitor.