



Center for Women's Health

FYI 5: Your Eighth Month

At the beginning of your eighth month, or 32 weeks, your baby weighs approximately four pounds and will gain one-third to one-half pound a week for the rest of the pregnancy. Your baby is also more sensitive to your activity now and a loud noise may startle him or her. He or she is about 16 inches long and his or her body is storing up nutrients (e.g. iron and calcium), getting antibodies from you to help fight disease right after birth and is starting to become more chubby.

Since your baby is using so much iron and calcium, **you** need to be getting enough, too. This is an important time to maintain a healthy diet. Calcium requirements increase to about 2000 mg. per day during the last trimester. Sometimes leg cramps are a sign of low calcium. If you are having difficulty getting enough dairy products in your diet, you may supplement your calcium intake with Tums or another calcium supplement.

Your body is getting ready for delivery. **Braxton-Hicks** contractions (also known as **false labor**+ contractions) may become stronger and more noticeable. Your ovaries release **relaxin**, a hormone that helps your pelvic joints and ligaments become looser and more mobile. This relaxation of the pelvic bones will help allow your baby to pass through the birth canal. You may notice increased discomfort in your hips, low back, and pubic bones. This discomfort is often worse with sudden movements such as jumping and twisting, so slow down a little. Sitting in the same position for a while makes you feel **stiff**+when you first get up, so change positions frequently.

Backaches are common due to the increased forward **pull**+ of the uterus and pelvic bone joint relaxation. Due to your change in shape you may be over-curving your back, which will cause it to tire quickly or ache. Maintaining good posture, wearing low, comfortable shoes, and squatting to pick something up instead of bending over will help. Exercises that straighten out the arch in your back may help, e.g. stand against a wall, slowly lower your body into a squatting position using the wall as support and hold for a few seconds. Another good exercise is to get down on the floor on all fours and arch your back like an angry cat. If your discomfort is severe please discuss it with us.

Please let us know if you have the following symptoms:

Marked swelling in your face and hands which appears quickly over a few days. Moderate swelling in feet and legs, however, is not abnormal and does not need to be reported unless accompanied by headaches or visual disturbances.

Visual disturbances that are **persistent**. These may be characterized as sparkling lights or dots, shooting stars, tunnel vision or blurring of vision.

Headaches that are severe and throbbing. Headaches accompanied by visual disturbances and/or sudden onset of swelling in hands and face, could be a sign of preeclampsia. **If these symptoms occur together, let us know right away.**

(over)

Abdominal pain or a sensation of fullness and/or tightness in the right upper side of your abdomen. This may be a sign that your liver is swelling due to preeclampsia.

If your bag of water breaks more than a month before your due date. Usually when your water breaks, there is a flow of thin, colorless fluid from your vagina. It may be a large gush of water, or a steady trickle of fluid. If you think you may have broken your bag of water, please call us right away. **We would like to see you within an hour of the time the leakage starts.**

If you notice a significant decrease in your baby's movement. Your baby's movements vary considerably depending on whether he or she is awake or asleep, the time of day, and his or her individual pattern. As you get closer to your due date, your baby's movements become gentler and more rolling rather than kicking. However, if your baby seems significantly less active, lay down on your left side and count each of your baby's movements. If this is a time when you know he/she is normally awake and active, and he/she **moves less than three times in an hour**, count for an additional hour. If you can still identify three or less movements in the next hour, please call us and we will arrange for further testing.

If any of these symptoms occur, please call us. **Our office telephone number is (734) 712-1990.** During the day, one of our office nurses will call you back. After normal office hours, you should call the same number, and you will be instructed on how to reach the doctor on call.