

Grow as baby grows

**As your belly grows bigger,
it is time to enjoy your pregnancy**



Pregnancy is a time of change. A suitable exercise regime and a healthy diet, coupled with some self-pampering, will keep you on a happy note! Chances are, if you look good, you'll probably feel great!

What to wear

As your pregnancy progresses, you probably will not be able to fit into your clothes, or your shoes. To save cost, you may consider having hand-me-downs from friends and relatives. In any case, here are some stuff you will need:

Maternity wear: Most women don't start showing until week 12, so you can still wear your usual clothes. But as your waistline starts to thicken between weeks 18 - 22, look for clothes that can last you through the pregnancy.

It is best to stick to comfortable, loose-fitting clothes. Choose breathable materials such as 100 per cent cotton, or silk so as not to irritate your skin. Opt for loose cotton underwear. Avoid tight socks or half leg stockings as they may reduce blood circulation in the feet and lower legs, increase swelling, fluid retention and worsen varicose veins.

Bras: Your breasts will get fuller towards the end of the pregnancy as your body prepares for breastfeeding. Wear bras that fit well, and have adjustable straps that are thick enough to carry the weight of your heavier breasts.



Wearing a lightweight bra at night for some support may be more comfortable than not wearing one at all. If you feel breathless and tight around the chest, it may be because of your bra.

Footwear: Keep to sensible flats or low-heeled shoes to reduce the risk of falling or tripping. Your feet will also swell and expand, so be prepared to wear bigger shoes. Feet will usually go back to normal after delivery.

What to expect

Like everything else, your skin will undergo some changes during pregnancy. Know what are some of these common changes to your skin or looks so you will not worry unduly over them.



Stretch marks: Most women will get stretch marks on the abdomen, breasts, buttocks and thighs. These fade to a lighter silver shade after your baby is born and should gradually pale and become less noticeable.

Spots: Pregnancy may cause some women's skin to retain more moisture, smoothening out wrinkles, and giving them a lovely glow. However, the higher levels of hormones can sometimes also mean greasy skin and acne. Spots may appear unexpectedly on the face and occasionally on the back too. These should disappear after your baby is born.

Pigmentation: Chloasma, also known as “the mask of pregnancy”, may appear. These brown patches on the face and neck may appear as lighter patches on darker-skinned women. These are due to the effect of pregnancy hormones, which stimulate the pigment formation on the skin. They will eventually lighten or fade off a few months after delivery.

Linea nigra – the dark vertical line usually from your navel to the pubic area – may appear for some but will also go away after baby is born.

Hair changes: Hormonal changes may increase hair growth or temporarily alter the hair texture in some women. Some women may see their hair becoming shiny and luscious while others may have lifeless and greasy hair.

After the baby is born, your hormonal levels decrease and some may experience loss of hair. Do not be alarmed as this change is temporary.

Teeth and gums: The increased levels of progesterone that are produced during pregnancy may cause your gums to become softer, spongy and more sensitive, making them susceptible to infection. Avoid sugary drinks and snacks. Practise good oral hygiene and have regular checkups with the dentist. See your dentist if your gums bleed due to pregnancy gingivitis. It is important to tell the dentist that you are pregnant so that he can avoid any treatment that may be harmful to your baby.

Stay connected

A stable and supportive network is important as it will help you cope with your pregnancy, delivery and care of your newborn. Couples should find ways to spend time and do things together to strengthen the relationship and improve communication as you prepare for the arrival of your baby.

Travelling: If you plan to spend time on a “baby moon” or holiday during the second trimester, make sure you are fit for travel. Most pregnant women are allowed to travel up to week 32, but check with the doctor and the airline before you plan your trip. Always carry a doctor’s letter with you certifying that you are safe to travel and your due date. Check whether there are vaccinations that you may need and find

out what healthcare facilities are available in case of an emergency.

During the journey, especially if it lasts more than five hours, make sure that you walk every half hour, flex or extend the ankles to prevent the possibility of getting Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), a condition where blood clots in the leg. Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. It is important to wear your seat belt while travelling. It should be diagonally strapped across your body, between your breasts and with the lap belt over your upper thighs. The straps should not be worn over your bump, but should lie above and below it.

Family and friends: If you have older children, do not forget to spend quality time with them. They need assurance that you still love them and that they would not be neglected when the new baby arrives.

Allow your parents and parents-in-law to share your joy or any anxiety you may have. Their experience in child care is an invaluable source for you to tap on. Spending time with your friends and doing things together can also help you to de-stress, and better cope with the challenges and responsibilities ahead.

