

Growing Together

26 weeks

Your Baby

- He can now hear sounds like music and your voice through the uterine wall. You may notice that he moves if there is a loud or sharp noise.
- His eyes are fully developed. He can finally open and close them. If you place a flashlight on your belly, he may respond with a startle or turn his head either toward or away from the light.
- Your baby's first bowel movement, called *meconium*, starts to fill the intestines.
- He has very little body fat, called *subcutaneous fat* (meaning fat under the skin). This means he still looks skinny, red, and wrinkled. Without fat, your baby will have a hard time controlling body temperature outside of the womb. That is why premature babies are kept in heated cribs and incubators. Right now, you are your baby's incubator.



At 26 weeks, your baby weighs about 1½ to 2 pounds. He is about 10 inches long from the top of his head to his rump.

Changes in You

- Your uterus is expanding in your abdominal cavity as your baby and placenta grow and the amniotic fluid increases. The top of your uterus is close to your waist.
- You may have some back pain. Your center of gravity has shifted to the front. This pulls your uterus forward and strains the ligaments that support it. Many pregnant women start leaning backward, which can lead to a backache. Massage can help relax your muscles and relieve the strain on your back.

- Some women find relief by wearing a sling that supports the uterus. You can do “pelvic rocking,” an exercise to help ease back pain, while you are sitting, standing, or lying down.
- Another reason for your back discomfort may be from the hormone *relaxin*, which helps your hips spread to prepare for childbirth.
- You also may find that your fingers, wrists, and hands ache. This is because many tissues in your wrist are swollen, and this may cause numbness or burning pain. All of these things will slowly return to normal after your baby is born.
- This is the period of the greatest weight gain. Keep eating good meals and include healthy snacks. Remember to drink plenty of water.
- Your pregnancy is becoming more real for your family and friends. Other people can feel the baby move.
- Loved ones can help ease the strain on your back by standing behind you and placing their interlaced hands beneath your belly.

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.