

DO'S AND DONT'S OF PREGNANCY

5 weeks....don't take too much alcohol during your pregnancy. Too much alcohol raises your risk of miscarriage and your baby's chances of having a low birth weight. It can also lead to a disorder called "fetal alcohol spectrum disorder", which causes serious health problems for your baby such as heart defects and behavioral disorder.

Do start an exercise routine like walking to the market place, do some mild to moderate "shamba work.", walking to church or visit a friend and back home. it may help prevent some of the aches and pains of pregnancy and many women find that it's a great stress reducer. Milking cows can also help reduce stress. exercise can also help you get ready for the endurance needed during labour.exercise will also make getting back into shape after your baby's born much easier. Do not push yourself too hard or let yourself get overheated or dehydrated.

Do take it easy try and relax, you can have a nap in the middle of the day; give yourself a break from your responsibilities.

6weeks....don't smoke cigarettes during your pregnancy. Smoking increases the risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, separation of the placenta from the uterus; baby can also get cleft lip and palate. Smoking also increases the chance that a baby will be stillborn or die in infancy. Every cigarette you don't light gives your baby a better chance of being healthy. if your not able to quit smoking on your own ask your caregiver for a referral to a smoking cessation program. Even if your not a smoker stay away from second hand smoke.

Do take care of your oral health. Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Hormonal shifts during pregnancy can make you more susceptible to gum disease .increased progesterone and estrogen levels can cause the gums to react differently to the bacteria in plaque resulting in swollen bleeding, tender gums.(gingivitis).see your doctor or dentist for a check up if you haven't visited one in the last 6 months.

7 weeks.....do take prenatal supplements, by now you should be on some form of them, talk to your doctor so that you get started on them if you haven't been taking them. Prenatal supplements contain more folic acid, iron and calcium than you will find in a standard multivitamin. Pregnant women need more of these nutrients (don't overdo the vitamins, though more is not necessarily better and in some cases can be dangerous.).its important to get enough folic acid while trying to conceive and during your first trimester(the period between conception and about 13 weeks into your pregnancy) ,because it reduces your baby's risk of developing abnormalities like neural tube birth defects (problems with the spinal cord ,skin covering the spine and bones protecting the spine).

This week do book an appointment with the doctor or healthcare giver to get started. make a list of queries you may have for the caregiver to clarify for you. Bring a list of all

your medication, prescriptions including supplements so that the doctor can assess whether they are safe to take now.

Look back over your calendar and note the first day of your last period, your doctor or midwife will use this date to estimate your baby's due date.(don't worry if you haven't been keeping track or have irregular periods, if you don't have a reliable menstrual date ,your doctor can schedule an early ultrasound to date your pregnancy.

Take some time to review your family medical history and your partners, if your not sure you can ask your parents or relatives if there is any medical condition in the family that has been passed on to siblings. This information will help guide your doctor while handling your pregnancy.

8 weeks.....don't get overscheduled stress can have a negative impact on your pregnancy ,causing health problems such as hypertension(high blood pressure) and may potentially cause a miscarriage. Its important to look at your life realistically and not get overscheduled. if you have a co wife do request for her assistance in dividing the house chores ,spread your daily duties evenly throughout the day, if you already have children you can send them to various chores outside the homestead.

9 weeks.....you may be feeling tired lately, this might probably be due to hormonal changes in particular the hormone progesterone may be contributing to your sluggishness, nausea and vomiting can cost you energy too and you might be having trouble getting a good night sleep. Try and relax, don't take sleeping pills always consult a doctor before starting any medication so that to confirm if it is safe for you and your baby.

10 weeks...mood swings are common now, it's normal to feel alternately elated and terrified about becoming a parent. These moods swings tend to ease up in 2nd trimester and might reappear as pregnancy winds to a close. Sometimes if the mood swings are extreme or interfering with your daily life you may be suffering from a disease condition known as depression, a relatively common condition. do share your feelings with your care provider who might refer you to a professional.

Also do let your health care provider know if you are in an abusive relationship. pregnancy can cause stress in any relationship and it's a common trigger of domestic violence which puts your health and your baby at risk.

11 weeks....you can participate in a wide range of activities during pregnancy. Walking is an excellent choice for the whole 9 months; you can visit your neighbors, walk to church if it's nearby. Exercise promotes muscle tone, strength and endurance 3 qualities that can help you carry the weight you gain during pregnancy.

If your breasts are sore get a good supportive cotton bra. your breasts might increase one or two more sizes, especially if this is your first pregnancy ,therefore do get a well fitting bra that makes you feel comfortable.

12weeks....observe normal kitchen hygiene i.e. wash fruits and vegetables, store meat, fish and dairy separately and at correct temperature and wash your hands after handling raw food particularly meat.

Eat plenty of starchy foods(whole grain, rice, fruit and vegetables) so as to limit constipation. You need plenty of calcium (milk, cheese, yoghurt) protein(lean meat, chicken and fish, eggs and iron(fortified cereals, red meat, green vegetables). Protect yourself from food poisoning cook all meat, poultry and fish thoroughly, don't leave left overs out for more than two hours. reheat them until steaming before you eat them. keep uncooked meat separate from other foods. consume perishable and ready to eat food as soon as possible after you buy it ,especially once you have opened the package, even if it hasn't yet passed the "use-by" date. the use-by date refers to unopened products.

13 weeks....this week try to reach out to women who have already made the transition to motherhood can offer good advice, a comforting shoulder .if you and your mother have a good relationship she may be the best source of support ,intact many women find pregnancy brings them closer to their own mum.

14 weeks....this week try to start planning for the eventual birth of your baby at the end of the pregnancy, talk to your partner so that you start saving money to be used during prenatal visits and eventual delivery when the time comes for you to go into labour.trying to prepare early enough will reduce inconveniences especially those related to finances, you can start buying baby clothes in preparation.

15 weeks....this week if you have an ultrasound imaging done at your hospital you may be able to know whether your baby is a boy or a girl, but sometimes depending on how the baby is lying in the uterus it might not be clear, it is equally not important to other pregnant women to know the sex of their baby's, others prefer to wait until delivery. You probably gaining weight by this week do avoid excessive weight gain as this can affect your pregnancy by increasing the risk for pregnancy complications, such as gestational diabetes (problem with your blood sugar control during pregnancy that can eventually lead to a big baby that might be difficult to deliver normally and might require cesarean delivery), .other complications from excessive weight gain include pre eclampsia, still birth and very pre term birth. Try and be active by doing your daily routine of chores, do not strain, try to rest when feeling tired and eat healthy and don't skip meals.

16 weeks....don't be surprised if you and your partner are feeling a little stressed out these days. Many pregnant couples worry about their baby's health and how they will handle the changes ahead. It's perfectly normal. do take time and talk with your partner if there are any issues that you feel are stressing you lately.

17 weeks....your baby is gaining weight every week and growing rapidly, you need to also eat healthy to increase your chances of having a healthy baby. start your day with a nutritious breakfast that includes adequate proteins, carbohydrates, fiber and a small amount of healthy fat (a simple cup of tea with bread or sweet potatoes "viazi tamu", yams "nduma", pumpkin or smashed bananas "matoke", boiled maize "mahindi ya kuchemsha will do.) Eat vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy products, and skip processed foods.

Keep healthy ,eat carrots (wash thoroughly before consumption) ,fresh fruits such as apples and bananas, drink plenty of water especially with your daily house chores routine to prevent you from going into dehydration.

18 weeks....try to avoid situations with a high risk of falling. wear low heeled shoes to reduce your risk of falling. if you are traveling in a vehicle try to buckle up keep the lap portion of the seat belt under your belly and the shoulder one to fit between your breasts ,this way you are comfortable with your now enlarging belly and you and your baby are safe.

19 weeks....this week you can try kegels exercises that strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor.i.e the muscles that support your urethra ,bladder ,uterus ,vagina and rectum.kegels helps prevent urine leaks during and after pregnancy and may even help you in the second stage of labor.whats more kegels increase circulation to your rectum and vaginal area ,so they may help keep hemorrhoids at bay and speed healing after child birth if you get an episiotomy(cut made on the side of your vagina to allow for childbirth if tissues around there are not allowing for normal delivery and might get tears.),hence helps with faster healing of an episiotomy.

HOW TO DO IT: tighten the muscles around your vagina as if trying to interrupt the flow of urine when going to the bathroom/latrine/toilet .use a “squeeze and lift” technique, working only your pelvic floor muscles while keeping your abdominal and leg muscles relaxed....hold for about 8 to ten seconds ,then release. do them in sets of ten(squeeze and release 10 times for one set) ,try work up 3 or 4 sets.

20 weeks....this week you and your partner should try choosing some possible baby names. for some couples baby naming can be fun and does a good job in strengthening the bond between you and your partner. some tips to try out when trying to settle on a name include :

1. uniqueness .an unusual name has the advantage of making your child stand out from the crowd. on the other hand a name no one has ever heard of and few can pronounce can bring attention your child might rather avoid.
2. relatives and friends. many parents choose to name their babies after a grandparent, another relative or a close friend.
- 3.initials and nicknames. people especially kids, can be cruel when it comes to nicknames, so try anticipating any potentially embarrassing initials e.g. P.E.E

21 weeks...it may become difficult to sleep through the night as your pregnancy progresses .you may start snoring, thanks in part to more of the hormone estrogen, which contributes to swelling of the mucous membranes that line the nose and may even cause you to make more mucus. try sleep on your side and elevate your head slightly. Heart burn and indigestion can make it extra uncomfortable to lie down in bed. try avoid foods that trigger your heart burn give yourself two to three hours to digest a meal before going to bed

Leg cramps can make it uncomfortable to sleep, try straightening your leg, heel first and gently flexing your toes or walk around for a few minutes.

You toss and turn all night trying to find a comfortable sleeping position. try to lie on your side with your knees bent and pillow between your legs. for extra comfort arrange other pillows under your belly and behind your back.

You might become hot and sweaty in the middle of the night. its common for pregnant women to feel a little warmer than usual due to your hormones and weight. keep your bedroom cool and strip down to bare essentials.

22 weeks...some pregnant women feel their sexual desire skyrocket when they are pregnant ,at least part of the time may enjoy the the increased blood flow to to the pelvic area and the heightened sensitivity to stimulation that this brings, as well as the increased vaginal lubrication due to hormonal changes, its normal to feel that way,. but its also perfectly normal not to crave for sex.

23 weeks....by now you may have noticed that you have thicker hair ,this is because you have reduced the amount of hair your shedding due to the hormonal changes, some women like this new found hair but others don't, if thicker hair makes you uncomfortable you can ask your saloonist to do some trimming. after your baby is born you will start to lose this excess hair.

Increased body hair due to sex hormones known as androgens can cause new hair to grow on your chin, upper lip, jaw and cheeks. stray hair can also grow on your belly ,arms ,legs and back. You can do some tweezing, shaving and if you have access to waxing services try it. they are all safe ways to manage these temporary changes.

24 weeks....you might notice faster growing finger nails. some womens' nails get harder ,while others get softer or more brittle. you can protect your nails by wearing rubber gloves when you are cleaning and using a moisturizer on them if they are brittles.dont chew on your nails, you might just end up damaging your teeth.

25 weeks....some pregnant women report that their skin looks much better than before they had conceived. others find that the hormones might aggravate skin conditions such as acne. do not by over the counter medication, always consult your doctor before starting any medications, you can wash twice a day with gentle soap or cleanser and make sure any makeup is oil free.

26 weeks....stretch marks might start to get noticeable to you by this time because your belly is expanding to accommodate the fetus in your uterus., you may get tiny tears in the supportive tissue that lie under the skin resulting in these stretch marks .these marks will begin to fade and become considerably less noticeable about six to 12 months after you give birth.do not try to use over the counter bleaching products or any medication without consulting your doctor.theres not much you can do about this besides trying not to gain excessive weight.

27 weeks....skin discolorations can be noticed in some women, this is due to increased production of a hormone melanin which can cause patches of darkened skin on your face. these pigment changes may become intensified if you spend time in the sun. you can protect your face by wearing a hat whenever your outdoors for long periods, if you have access to a sunblock cream that offers uv protection you can use it.

28 weeks....you may notice that you cant move as often as you used to earlier in the pregnancy, unless your doctor has advised you otherwise ,its fine to continue to exercise but follow a few safety measures. dont lie flat on your back or any exercise where your about to lose your balance e.g carrying a heavy sack of maize on your back. between 28 weeks and 36 weeks try to see your doctor every 2 weeks for usual check up on your pregnancy and general health, don't wait until very sick to book an appointment with your health provider. try and appreciate your partner .
this week, cook him his favourite meal, tell him how appreciative you are of his support and share with your partner your worries and feelings.

29 weeks....if your lower back seems a little achy lately its because of your growing uterus which shifts your centre of gravity ,stretches out and weakens your abdominal muscles, as well as hormonal changes that loosen your joints..walking long distances, standing for too long, and lifting heavy objects can put a strain on your back. a warm bath might bring relief. avoid activities that require bending and twisting at the same time.

30 weeks....this week try to come up with a birth plan. this gives you an idea of how you would like your delivery handled and helps prepare you early before term. many women in our society prefer the traditional birth attendant sometimes due to pressure from relatives especially the mother in law who prefer the traditional culture of delivery sighting hospital as the main reason for women going into theatre for surgery. its important you understand as early as now that the hospital is always available to you to assist you to have a safe delivery. not all women go for surgery in the hospital, you will be given a chance to deliver normally under the supervision of the maternity team, in the event the babys life or your life is in danger or the labor is not progressing as expected ,your doctor will explain to you and if need be recommend surgery only if all else has failed. so there is no need of you staying away from a hospital based on the fact that you will under go surgery without trial of normal labor. there is also no reason whatsoever to succumb to pressure from in laws to deliver at a traditional birth attendant if indeed your wish is to deliver at a hospital. do try and talk to your partner about this and gain his support on this matter. remember that the safest place to deliver you and your baby is at a health facility.

31 weeks.....this week it may be farthest from your mind ,but its not too soon to think about family planning. you will want to have made some decisions about postpartum birth control before your baby arrives .talk to your health care provider about the various options you have at hand. also share your thoughts with your partner so as to help in decision making .

32 weeks....around this time some women feel an unpleasant sensation in their lower legs and an irresistible urge to move them while trying to relax or sleep.if this sensation is at least temporarily relieved when you move,you may have what's known as restless legs syndrome.no one knows what causes it,but it's relatively common among expectant mothers.try stretching or massaging your legs and cut down on caffeine which can make the symptoms worse.talk to your doctor if you can try some iron supplements which sometimes helps.

33 weeks....your growing uterus may contribute to a medical condition called haemorrhoids.these swollen blood vessels in your rectal area(part of the large intestine before the anal opening) are common during pregnancy,fortunately they clear up in the weeks after giving birth.if they are itchy or painful try soaking in a sitz bath(warm water with some added salt in it,you sit on the basin water) .avoid sitting or standing for long hours.do not use any over the counter medication.always verify with your healthcare provider.

34 weeks....this week you can run some errands i.e purchase baby diapers wipers,baby friendly laundry detergents,sanitary pads for you(you will bleed for a few weeks after delivery).,try and talk to your mother and relatives about child birth and their experiences in the delivery room,this will help ease your mind especially if you are a first time mother as you gear in to the final weeks.

35 weeks....in the final weeks monitor closely your baby's movements.there are various ways to do this .a common approach is choose a time of day when your baby tends to be active sit quietly or lie on your side so you won't get distracted .time how long it will take for you to get 10 distinct movements,i.e kicks twitches and whole body movements count.you should feel atleast 10 movements within two hours.(don't worry ,it probably won't take that long. Sometimes you will feel ten kicks within the first ten minutes),if you don't feel 10 movements in two hours call your health care provider or go to the nearest health facility for assistance.

36 weeks....this week you and your partner should map out the most direct route to the hospital .if the health facility is quite a distance away from your home get in contact with a transporter who can offer services even in the middle of the night incase you go into labour.in our set up common means of transport are taxis,matatu,boda boda and tuk tuk.

37 weeks....it may be getting harder to sleep at night in the last few weeks especially with the big size of your uterus, try and take it easy during the day try to limit the daily chores ,do not strain yourself ask for help from your close friends or relatives to help you complete chores. Continue monitoring your baby's movements.

38 weeks....with the eminent arrival of your baby it is important to learn importance of breast milk to your baby. Breast milk is the best food for babies.it contains all the nutrients a baby needs for healthy growth and development during the first six months of life and helps protect a baby from many illnesses.breast feeding also provides many health benefits for mothers.

The benefits of breast feeding to the baby include:

1. Breastfed babies are less likely to have ear infections, allergies, lower respiratory tract infections (such as pneumonia), urinary tract infections, vomiting and diarrhea
2. Breast milk is easy for baby to digest.
3. Breast feeding appears to reduce the risk of obesity and chances of diabetes in children

The benefits of breastfeeding to mother include:

1. Breast feeding helps the mother lose extra pregnancy weight as most of her fat is used by the body in milk production.
2. Enhances the bonding between the mother and her baby
3. Breast feeding may help reduce a woman's risk of ovarian cancer and breast cancer before menopause.
4. Breast feeding is a cost effective way of feeding an infant, providing nourishment for a child at a small cost to the mother.
5. Breast feeding releases hormones (oxytocin and prolactin) hormones that relax the mother and make her feel more nurturing toward her baby. These hormones also help contract the mother's uterus hence reducing bleeding after child birth.
6. Breast feeding for at least 24 months (2 yrs) is associated with a lower risk of heart disease.

It's also important to understand that if you are H.I.V positive then your health care provider will guide you through your options for infant feeding, as H.I.V can be transmitted through breast milk from mother to child.

It's also important to understand that if you are H.I.V positive and not on medication at time of labor or presentation to a health facility your health care provider will take you through the medication that you might be started on to help reduce the chances of baby getting infected. Once delivered your baby may also be started on some medication that your health care provider will explain to you on how to go about it and when to come back for check ups.