

# A guide to your pregnancy month by month



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



**breastfeeding.ie**  
Your breastfeeding support network



# Congratulations, you're pregnant

You can use this calendar to keep a record of important dates and events during your pregnancy – you may like to keep it as a memento of your pregnancy to be shared with your baby when they grow up. The calendar also contains useful information to help you have a healthy pregnancy.

Now is a good time to think about what will happen when your baby is born. How you choose to feed your baby is a very important decision which can affect your child's health for years to come. If your baby could choose, they would want to be breastfed.

The World Health Organisation and the Department of Health and Children recommend that mothers breastfeed their babies, with no other food or drinks, for the first six months. After that, you can combine breastfeeding with healthy foods for your baby.

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# 1<sup>st</sup> Month

During the first month, your baby's head, brain, spinal cord, lungs and heart begin to form.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Visit your GP.

Take folic acid (400 micrograms) every day.

Get your copy of Healthy Eating for Pregnancy from your local health promotion department.





## When is my baby due?

Your doctor or midwife will work out your due date by adding 9 months and 7 days to the first day of your last period. This is called your expected date of delivery (EDD).

They can also work this out from your ultrasound scan or examination. Remember this is only an estimate – most women have their babies slightly before or after this date.

## Morning sickness

You may suffer from morning sickness (nausea and vomiting) due to hormonal changes in the early months. Despite its name, this can happen at any time of the day or night. If you do suffer from morning sickness, try to:

- avoid cooking smells
- get as much fresh air as possible
- drink plenty of water
- eat small meals frequently (every 2-3 hours), rather than two or three larger ones
- avoid fatty or spicy foods
- eat a dry cracker, plain biscuit or a slice of toast in the morning before you get out of bed

Ask your midwife or dietitian for advice. If symptoms are severe, contact your GP. Morning sickness usually improves after 16 weeks.

## Eating for two?

You should eat a balanced healthy diet, for your own health as well as your baby's growth and development. You don't need to 'eat for two', but it is important to eat enough of the right foods. Use the Healthy Eating for Pregnancy booklet to plan a healthy diet.

## Something to think about

Cut out alcohol altogether while you're pregnant – this is the best way to reduce any risk of damage to your baby from alcohol.

If you or your partner smoke, do your best to stop now. Cigarette smoke releases dangerous chemicals into your blood which pass on to your baby. These can reduce your baby's growth and increase the risk of complications. If you need help to stop, talk to your doctor, call the Quitline on 1850 201 203 or visit [www.giveupsmoking.ie](http://www.giveupsmoking.ie)

Don't take any drugs – not even paracetamol – without asking your doctor.

# 2<sup>nd</sup> Month

During the second month, your baby's organs, muscles, bones, arms and legs begin to grow. Your baby's face is also developing.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Talk to your GP about antenatal care (care before the baby is born). You are entitled to free GP care and public hospital care for your pregnancy and for 6 weeks after your baby is born.

Take regular gentle exercise such as walking or swimming. If you play sport, check with your GP if it is ok to keep it up.

## Why do I have to go to my doctor or midwife so often?

Regular antenatal care is important so that you and your baby stay healthy throughout pregnancy. You can choose to have your check-ups with midwives only, with your GP sharing your care with the maternity hospital or midwife (combined care scheme), or just with the doctors and midwives in the hospital. Ask your GP's advice to help you decide where you would like your baby to be born.

## Some changes you may notice

- You may feel the need to use the bathroom more often to pass urine.
- You may get constipated. Eat extra fruit and drink plenty of water to avoid this.
- You may feel extremely tired. Try to get as much rest as you can.
- You may get morning sickness (nausea and vomiting) in the morning or during the day.
- You may have mixed feelings. However much you may want this baby, it is only natural to worry about how things will turn out. It helps to talk through your feelings with your partner, a friend or your doctor.

## Things to do

- Always wash your hands before and after preparing food, using the toilet, gardening or handling animals.
- Get plenty of rest. If you feel tired, try to make time to put your feet up.
- Make sure all the foods you eat are fresh, clean, hygienically prepared and stored carefully.

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Month

During the third month, your baby's heart grows more. Eyelids, fingers, toes and skin grow, and the baby begins moving (although you won't feel it yet).

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Book your antenatal classes. Classes will help you feel prepared and confident about labour and the birth of your baby.

Let your employer know you are pregnant. Discuss any possible work-related dangers with your doctor or midwife. Find out about maternity leave and entitlements.





## Why is breastfeeding good for my baby?

Breastmilk is the perfect first food, especially if your baby arrives early. Breastfeeding helps you continue the close relationship you have had with your baby during pregnancy.

It is natural for babies to be breastfed – it helps them feel safe and happy. Breastmilk protects against colds, gastroenteritis, chest and ear infections and allergies.

## Some changes you may notice

You may feel faint or actually faint, especially during early pregnancy. Your blood pressure tends to be lower than usual, so standing up quickly can cause you to feel faint. The demands made on your body by the growing baby may also cause your blood sugar levels to drop.

If you feel faint:

- sit or lie down for a short time
- stand up slowly
- eat regularly - do not skip meals

## Something to think about

Breastmilk is a perfect food for babies, made to provide them with their exact nutritional needs at every stage of growth. Breastmilk also has the huge benefit of antibodies, which protect your baby against chest, ear and throat infections. Babies who are not breastfed may have a higher risk of severe chest infections from viruses such as pandemic H1N1-Swine Flu.

## Vitamin D

Whether you choose to breastfeed or formula feed, you should give your baby 5 micrograms (5µg) of Vitamin D<sub>3</sub> every day. Ask your pharmacist, doctor, nurse or healthcare professional for more information or visit [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

# 4<sup>th</sup> Month

During the fourth month, your baby is growing fast. Fingernails and hair grow and the baby can smile and frown.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Your first scan – you will get to see your growing baby for the first time.

New clothes – you will need loose, comfortable clothes. Borrow from family and friends, as you will only wear them for a short time. Buy a special maternity bra at a shop with a trained fitter where you can be measured properly.

## Some changes you may notice

- You may start to feel the baby move – it will feel like a slight fluttering sensation to begin with
- You may feel less sick
- Your energy levels may begin to return
- Your waist will begin to expand
- Your legs may ache

## Why is breastfeeding best for me?

- It helps you lose weight and get back in shape after the birth
- It reduces the risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer
- The closeness involved helps you to bond with your baby
- It is an easy way to soothe your baby
- It is always ready and at the correct temperature
- It makes night feeds easier for you
- It is free and environmentally friendly

## Healthy snacks

You should eat regularly, every 2-3 hours. Choose healthy snacks such as fruit, yoghurt, a glass of milk, a slice of cheese and a cracker, a sandwich or a bowl of soup.

## To prevent constipation

- Choose wholegrain cereals for breakfast and/or for a snack later in the day
- Try to eat wholegrain/brown breads
- Choose wholegrain/brown pasta, rice and spaghetti
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables - at least five portions per day
- Try a glass of warm water first thing in the morning – this helps get the digestive system off to a good start
- Drink plenty of fluids – at least 8 cups per day (water, fresh fruit juices, prune juice)

# 5<sup>th</sup> Month

The baby now has fingerprints and footprints and is sucking its thumb. You are halfway through your pregnancy and you should feel your baby moving.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Visit your local library or bookshop. Read books on pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding such as: 'Bestfeeding: Getting Breastfeeding Right for You' and 'The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding'.

Check out useful websites such as: [www.breastfeeding.ie](http://www.breastfeeding.ie) [www.lalecheleagueireland.com](http://www.lalecheleagueireland.com) [www.cuidiu-ict.ie](http://www.cuidiu-ict.ie)

## Some changes you may notice

- You will continue to get bigger as your baby grows. You will also notice an increase in your breasts and other areas of your body in preparation for the birth. The growing size of your womb can put pressure on your bladder – so you need to pass urine more often. The pressure on your stomach can give you heartburn and pressure on your gut can cause constipation.
- You may notice some clear bluish fluid coming from your nipples. This is colostrum. It is the first milk which nourishes and provides your baby with important antibodies in the early days after birth. Use absorbent pads inside a properly-fitted maternity bra to soak up the fluid.
- You will feel your baby move quite a lot from now on.
- You may find it hard to sleep. Support your back and tummy with pillows as well as tucking a pillow between your legs.

## How much weight will I gain?

Most women gain 11.5kg to 12.5kg (25 to 28 pounds) during pregnancy. Pregnant women gain weight at different rates, so don't worry if you get bigger sooner than your pregnant friends. Breastfeeding can help you get your figure back after your baby is born.

## Breastfed children are less likely to get

- Gastroenteritis and other tummy upsets
- Food allergies and food intolerances
- Chest and ear infections
- Allergic disorders such as asthma and eczema
- Diabetes

Breastfeeding also helps your baby's mental development. Breastfed babies have straighter teeth.

## Things you can do

- Make a birth plan with your partner, doctor and midwife, setting out how you would like to give birth. Remember that some pain relief may make your baby drowsy which could make it harder to feed
- Don't work or exercise too hard
- Move more slowly to avoid accidents



# 6<sup>th</sup> Month

During the sixth month, your baby's teeth are beginning to grow. Your baby can now hear your voice and music.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Contact a breastfeeding or mother-to-mother support group. If you get in touch now, it will be easier to get support after your baby is born.

Start shopping for baby clothes and equipment.

## Some changes you may notice

- Your back might ache. This is because of the weight of your belly so make sure you walk and sit using the correct posture. Don't stand for long periods.
- You may have leg cramps. These usually happen at night. Massage the affected leg and bend your foot up towards your shin. Regular leg and ankle exercises and swimming can help. Don't cross your legs while sitting or lying down.
- Your skin is likely to take on a healthy glow. You may notice dark patches of skin around your eyes and nose. This is called 'the mask of pregnancy' and will go away after the baby is born. You may also notice a dark line (linea nigra) from your navel down to your pubic hair. This will go away six months to a year after the baby is born.
- Your heart beats faster than before. This is to provide the extra oxygen your baby needs to grow and develop.
- Itching can be a problem in pregnancy. It may help to use cotton underwear. Add baking soda to your bath water and apply calamine lotion. Contact your doctor immediately if the itching doesn't go away, or is severe and affects most of your body.

## Will I be able to have a social life and breastfeed?

Yes you will! As you become more confident, you will be able to breastfeed your baby whenever and wherever your baby needs. Breastfeeding is more convenient when you need to be away from home as you don't need to bring bottles or heat them up.

You can also express milk for your baby's feed and refrigerate it so that someone else can feed your baby. Remember getting fresh air, exercise and adult company will be important after your baby is born.

## Contact a breastfeeding or mothers' support group

Find out about a breastfeeding or mothers' support group near you. Contact your local public health nurse, visit [www.breastfeeding.ie](http://www.breastfeeding.ie) or contact the HSE Infoline 1850 24 1850 for details. Groups are very happy for mothers to attend when they are pregnant. It is a good chance to meet and talk to mothers who are breastfeeding to help build your confidence and prepare you for what is ahead.

# 7<sup>th</sup> Month

Your baby's eyes begin to open and close. You have now moved into your final three months - the countdown until your baby is born begins.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Start thinking about who will mind your baby if you plan to return to paid work.

You can combine breastfeeding and work – find out if your workplace has a breastfeeding policy.

## Something to think about

- Breastfeeding needs no preparation
- Travelling with your baby is much easier when you breastfeed
- You can express milk for your baby for use when you are not there
- Expressed milk can be safely stored and frozen for later use

All babies should be given a suitable Vitamin D3-only supplement of 5 micrograms every day until 1 year old.

## Can every woman breastfeed?

Yes, virtually all women can breastfeed. In Norway, Sweden and Denmark, 99% of mothers breastfeed and 73% are still breastfeeding at 6 months. Some mothers breastfeed easily from the first day; for others it may take a bit of practice.

## Are my breasts too small?

No – all shapes and sizes produce milk. The size of your breasts is related to the amount of fat tissue, not to their ability to produce milk. You can feed with flat or inverted nipples with support and assistance. Babies latch on to the area behind the nipple so the shape of your nipple is not important.

It's important to learn how to place your baby at the breast properly. Your midwife, public health nurse, La Leche League or Cuidiú volunteer will help you learn this after your baby is born.

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## Warning Signs

Tell your doctor right away if:

- You don't feel your baby moving as much as usual – from about 20-22 weeks you should feel your baby move at least 10 times over a 12 hour day
- You have bleeding at any time
- You have pains or cramps in your lower tummy, lower back, pelvis or top of thigh area

# 8<sup>th</sup> Month

The wrinkles on your baby's skin are filling out with fat. Most babies settle in an upside down position, ready for birth.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Practice your breathing for labour.  
Pack your bag for your stay in hospital.



## What do I need to bring to hospital?

Check with your hospital for a list of what you will need for your stay. Choose front-button nightdresses or pyjamas as these give ease of access to your baby when breastfeeding.

## Does it take much time to breastfeed?

During the first few weeks, while you and your baby are learning to breastfeed, feeds can take from twenty minutes to an hour every three hours or so. Feeding on demand (whenever your baby looks for milk) is important to build up a good supply. After this time, your baby will develop a more regular feeding pattern.

Small babies have small tummies! As your baby grows so will their tummy. Feeding times give you a chance to sit back and relax with your new baby.

## Is breastfeeding uncomfortable?

No, but you may find the sensation a bit uncomfortable at the start. This discomfort usually disappears after a few minutes. If your baby is in the right position and attached to the breast properly, breastfeeding will not be painful. Your midwife, public health nurse, La Leche League or Cuidiú volunteer will help you get this right from the start.

If you are not sure about breastfeeding – give it a go. Even the first few days of breastfeeding will give your baby a good start.

# 9<sup>th</sup> Month

Your baby continues to grow and prepares to be born by moving down into the pelvis.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Make plans for getting to hospital and for someone to mind older children.

Keep telephone numbers for the hospital, ambulance service and taxi by the phone in case of emergencies.

If your waters break, contact the hospital.



## How will I know I'm in labour?

There are 3 main signs:

- A 'show' – a bloodstained mucous plug that comes from the opening of the cervix at the bottom of the womb. This may happen 1–3 days before labour begins.
- Your waters break – this is a gush of water from the vagina which shows that the water sack around the baby has burst. This usually means that labour pains will start within the next 24–48 hours. Always tell your midwife or doctor when your waters break.
- The most obvious sign of labour is frequent and painful cramps in your tummy or pain in your lower back, pelvis or upper thigh area every 10 minutes or more often. Let your midwife or doctor know when this happens and get ready to go to the hospital.

If you're not sure whether you are in labour or not, ring your maternity hospital, midwife or doctor for advice.

If you're overdue, don't worry. A lot of women go past their due date. Your doctor will arrange regular checks to make sure your baby is ok.

## Something to think about

You will need time to rest and recover after the birth. Talk to your partner, family and friends about how they can help. When your baby is born you will appreciate practical help with everyday tasks such as housework, meals and caring for older children.

# 10<sup>th</sup> Month Congratulations

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Give yourself time to rest and recover.  
Contact your local support group.

## Get breastfeeding off to a good start

Feed your baby as soon as you can after the birth. Babies are often very wide awake and alert after birth and are eager to suck, so it is a good time to have the first feed. Keep your naked baby on your chest in skin-to-skin contact after delivery. The earlier your baby begins learning how to suck the better, and it also helps your breasts to produce milk. Newborn babies need frequent, small feeds as their tummies are small. If your baby does not feed immediately or shortly after the birth, don't worry. Having the chance to lick and smell your milk will help with the next feed when they are more awake.

## Breastfeeding in the first 3-5 days

Breastmilk is very easy to digest and frequent feeds are normal, especially in the early weeks. Frequent feeds also increase your milk supply. The feeding pattern for a breastfed baby is quite different from that for a formula fed baby. Don't give your baby anything other than breastmilk. Other foods and drinks (even water) can reduce your supply of milk.

Remember – any breastfeeding is better than none. Even if you only breastfeed for a few days or weeks, your baby will benefit from the health protection effects. Every day is a benefit.

Breastfeeding is a learning process that needs time and commitment. Your midwife and public health nurse will be there to help if you need it. La Leche League and Cuidiú - the Irish Childbirth Trust - have volunteers in most areas to provide help, support and reassurance. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

By breastfeeding you are making a valuable, lifelong contribution to your baby's health and development. After you get over the first few weeks, you will find breastfeeding hugely enjoyable and satisfying, not just for your baby but for yourself too.

## Time to rest and recover

After your baby is born, you will most likely feel extremely excited and tired. It is very important to give yourself plenty of time to recover. Concentrate on caring for and getting to know your baby. If you can, leave other responsibilities to your partner or other family members.

## Helpful tips for mum

- Sleep when the baby sleeps
- Accept all offers of help
- Have visitors who look after you
- Check out local support groups
- Prepare and eat simple meals
- Allow your partner to be involved
- Laugh and enjoy your baby





## Community supports for mothers

Your public health nurse will visit you in your home within the first few days after your baby's birth. She will give you information on well-baby clinics and breastfeeding or mother-to-mother support groups in your area. You can also get information on HSE, La Leche League or Cuidiú breastfeeding support groups on [www.breastfeeding.ie](http://www.breastfeeding.ie) or by ringing the HSE infoline 1850 24 1850, or in your local health centre or library.

## Postnatal depression

1 in 10 women are affected by postnatal depression. Many women get the 'baby blues', which last a few days in the first week or two. Postnatal depression lasts longer and can happen any time after baby is born. The symptoms of postnatal depression are varied, but sleeplessness, loss of appetite, anxiety, panic attacks and being either over active or under active are common. If you feel you have any of these symptoms for more than a few days, or are finding it difficult to cope, don't be afraid to tell family or friends, your doctor or your public health nurse. Don't try to cope alone – help is available.

## Breastfeeding on a busy schedule is worth it

Breastfeeding is definitely worth it – for the closeness you will feel to your baby and the health benefits for your baby – fewer upset tummies,

allergies, infections – mean less time lost to illness. Breastmilk is specially designed to satisfy all your baby's nutritional needs for the first 6 months. You can continue breastfeeding after 6 months while giving your baby healthy foods. Breastfeeding has health and other benefits up to 2 years of age and beyond. Visit [www.breastfeeding.ie](http://www.breastfeeding.ie) for information on breastfeeding when returning to work.

## Eat well for you

You can continue to follow most of the advice for healthy eating in pregnancy after your baby is born. Make sure you eat regularly. Choose healthy foods and snacks. If you are breastfeeding, let your appetite decide how much you eat and drink.

Caring for a new baby is hard work. Now is not the time to start a weight loss diet. This may leave you feeling tired and finding it hard to cope. It may also reduce your milk supply. Breastfeeding uses up the fat your body stored during pregnancy and helps you return to your pre-pregnancy figure faster. If you do not breastfeed, eat smaller portions.

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## Useful contacts:

### **La Leche League of Ireland**

See local phone book for details of your local support person

[www.lalecheleagueireland.com](http://www.lalecheleagueireland.com)

email: [leader@lalecheleagueireland.com](mailto:leader@lalecheleagueireland.com)

### **Cuidiú – Irish Childbirth Trust**

(01) 872 4501

[www.cuidiu-ict.ie](http://www.cuidiu-ict.ie)

email: [generalenquiry@cuidiu.com](mailto:generalenquiry@cuidiu.com)

### **Maternity Benefit Section**

Department of Social and Family Affairs

(043) 45211

### **Postnatal Depression Ireland**

(021) 492 3162

[www.pnd.ie](http://www.pnd.ie)

email: [support@pnd.ie](mailto:support@pnd.ie)

### **Irish Multiple Birth Association**

(01) 874 9056

[www.imba.ie](http://www.imba.ie)

email: [info@imba.ie](mailto:info@imba.ie)

### **Irish Sudden Infant Death Association**

Lo-call helpline 1850 391 391

[www.isida.ie](http://www.isida.ie)

email: [isida@eircom.net](mailto:isida@eircom.net)

### **Miscarriage Association of Ireland**

(01) 873 5702

[www.miscarriage.ie](http://www.miscarriage.ie)

email: [info@miscarriage.ie](mailto:info@miscarriage.ie)

## Local contact details:

Baby's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Baby's weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Baby's length: \_\_\_\_\_

Colour of hair: \_\_\_\_\_

Colour of eyes: \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme (June 2009)

The table below outlines the immunisations (injections) your child is due and at what age. These immunisations are free from GPs who have an immunisation contract with the HSE – check with your GP if they have an immunisation contract.

Date Received:	Age:	Vaccine:
	Birth – 1 month	BCG
	2 months	6 in 1 + PCV
	4 months	6 in 1 + Men C
	6 months	6 in 1 + PCV + Men C
	12 months	MMR + PCV
	13 months	Men C + HiB

### Vaccine:

- BCG protects against Tuberculosis (TB)
- 6 in 1 protects against Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough), Polio, HiB and Hepatitis B
- Men C Meningococcal C
- PCV Pneumococcal vaccine
- HiB Haemophilus Influenza B
- MMR Measles, Mumps and Rubella

### Your Child's Immunisations

A guide for parents is available from your public health nurse. There is an immunisation record card inside the back cover. You should bring this booklet with you when you go to your GP's for immunisation. For more information visit [www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)



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