

# Information for 16-24 Weeks

***Congratulations!*** You are almost to the half-way point. The second trimester is the period of time when you will probably feel the best. A little bit of energy will return and hopefully most nausea will disappear.

## **Triple Screen**

At 16-20 weeks you can elect to have a blood test done of three hormones. This is a test that will give you your risk of having a baby with spina bifida, Down's Syndrome, or other chromosomal problems. Unfortunately, this is not a "yes" or "no" test. You will get a risk number according to your age (for example, 1 in 500 risk of Down's) and then an adjusted risk from the blood test (for example 1 in 1000 risk of Down's). If the number increases the test will then be considered positive. You will then have to decide if you want to proceed with further testing that may include intensive ultrasound and/or amniocentesis. An amniocentesis is offered if your risk of Down's is greater than about 1 in 200 or if you are 35 or older.

An amniocentesis is when a needle is placed through your abdominal wall into the uterus to take a little bit of fluid from around the baby. This test is the only way to know for sure if your baby has a problem with its chromosomes, such as Down's Syndrome. There is a risk for miscarriage from amniocentesis of 1 in 200 – 300.

Some people would elect to terminate a pregnancy with complications such as this. If this were the case for you we would recommend this test. If you would not terminate a pregnancy, then you need to decide how much risk you're willing to take to get the diagnosis. You also need to consider how difficult it would be for you to have this kind of "surprise" at the time of delivery. There are times the risks have been increased based on this test and patients have worried excessively during the pregnancy, just to have a normal infant. There have also been times when the test revealed low risks and the infant still had Down's Syndrome. It is definitely not a perfect test. We encourage you to read the pamphlet that we have available for you. Whatever you decide is best for you is fine with us. Just let us know.

## **Fetal Movement**

Most people will start to feel their baby move around 20 weeks. Some may feel it earlier but you shouldn't be alarmed if you haven't until 20 weeks. We don't expect you to feel daily activity until 23-24 weeks.

## **Abdominal Pain**

During your second trimester you may experience round ligament pain which is caused by enlarging uterus stretching the ligaments that hold it in place. This pain will be sharp, off to the side, and radiate to the top of your leg. While severe, it usually only lasts for a few seconds and is nothing to worry about. Gas pains will be similar, usually occurring on the left side, and will likewise be sharp, short and will come and go. Lastly, a hormone called "relaxin" is released that relaxes the joints in your pelvis. This will lead to some back and hip pain and the feeling that things are "loose". These problems are often improved with Tylenol. You should call for pains that are persistent and that worsen over time, or any pain associated with bleeding. You may find that with each pregnancy your pains are more intense or start earlier and this is generally normal. Let us know if you are concerned about this.

## **Showing and Ultrasound**

Twenty weeks is when most will start to “show”. However you may “show” sooner with each pregnancy. You will also be offered an ultrasound and you should be able to tell the sex at this time...if the baby cooperates! We feel that an ultrasound is important and encourage you to have it done. Most insurances cover ultrasounds, but you may want to check your policy first. For medical legal reasons, videotaping ultrasounds has been discontinued. You will receive some pictures of the baby and a CD with some images.

## **Headaches**

It is not uncommon from around 17 to 24 weeks to have an increase in headaches. This is most likely due to the normal drop in blood pressure around this time. If this happens to you, make sure you are drinking lots of water and resting as much as you need to. You can take Tylenol as needed. You may want to add a little caffeine if your headache still persists, such as a Diet Coke or Excedrin (aspirin-free). If all of this fails, call us and we can give you something stronger. You should not use prescription migraine medicines such as Imitrex during your pregnancy.

## **Skin Changes**

Stretch marks are caused when the skin stretches too fast for the body to properly adapt. There is no way to know who will get them and unfortunately, creams and lotions are ineffective. However, if you find a cure we'd love to know about it! You may also experience acne, oily skin, changes in the color or tone of your skin – almost anything can occur. Most of these are due to hormonal changes and you'll return to normal after your delivery. Rashes are very common in pregnancy and can be treated with antihistamines such as Claritin or Benadryl, but please alert us to any rashes that you may notice.

## **Constipation**

The hormones of pregnancy will slow down your bowels and may lead to constipation. This can often be quite severe if left too long. Fiber, water and exercise are recommended. You may also use stool softeners like colace if needed. Please call if it persists despite these treatments.

**If you have any questions please call!!! Enjoy your second trimester!**