

Pregnancy



ARTICLE

18-Week pregnant: Development and diet

Lots of leaps and bounds happening in week 18, from nerve cells multiplying to the beginnings of fingerprints. Read more about this

week.

3 mins

to read

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WEEK 18 DEVELOPMENT

It is quite unbelievable to stroke your belly and know that there is a person growing in there. And when you imagine interacting with this little person – how they will smile, what they will look like – it is quite incredible, isn't it? Perhaps you know your child's sex. Or maybe you are waiting until her birth to find out. Either way, it's almost time for the second ultrasound scan. This time, your doctor be able to verify that your child is developing healthily, but also whether it is a girl or a boy. Don't be disappointed if you would like to know but nothing can be seen yet. Your child has to be lying "correctly" or even the most practised gynaecologist's eye cannot determine his or her gender.

In just one of pregnancy's incredible facts, by this week your child has produced most of the billions of brain cells that he will have at birth! Muscles are getting stronger, too, and his movements more vigorous so if you haven't felt your little one dancing around yet, you should soon. It all depends on the temperament of your child. Other developments are taking place with his hands - his fingers are developing little nails and fingerprints are starting to emerge.

NUTRITION

Unfortunately, pregnancy can interfere with normal bowel movements. We can't stress it enough: a diet rich in fibre, fluid, and moderate activity can help. Fresh or cooked vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, nuts, and legumes can work wonders. Drink enough (2 litres of fluid per day) to hydrate and facilitate "transit". And try starting your day with a glass of water or fresh orange or grapefruit juice with the pulp left in. Soak prunes overnight to soften them and enjoy for breakfast with yoghurt – they are, safe natural laxatives and can help with your lazy bowel function. And, continue the walking or other activity you have been doing throughout your pregnancy. If, despite these small tips, your worries persist, talk to your doctor. Above all, do not take over-the-counter medications without consult of your doctor.

TIPS

You've been told to consume lots of calcium-rich foods to strengthen your bones and those of your unborn child but what do you do in case of lactose intolerance? You just have to be more creative to get your needs met. A lot of people with lactose intolerance can still continue to eat some cheese or yogurt (some of the lactose is removed as these foods ferment). There are also lactose-free and lactose-reduced milks available in some regions. Besides dairy products, some foods have added calcium, such as some breads and juices; check the food package to be sure. Dark and leafy vegetables (including "sea vegetables" – seaweed) and dried beans are also sources of calcium.

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