



— Time to Talk —

THE NINTH MONTH

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THE SISTERS DISCUSS THE FINAL MONTH OF PREGNANCY

By the time they reach their third trimester, most women are desperate to meet their baby. Because babies are considered ‘term’ at 37 weeks, it’s worth making sure you are ready for the arrival by then. That said, every extra day they stay inside, up until 40 weeks, is beneficial, so take the opportunity to relax – it will be your last chance for a while!

HOW YOU MAY BE FEELING

- Most likely tired and exasperated – every movement will feel like an effort.
- You will hopefully have started maternity leave by now and may notice a strong nesting instinct. You’ll find yourself tidying and sorting endlessly. Don’t overdo it! The most important thing is to find the time to rest.
- The hormone changes that happen in late pregnancy will make your breasts swell (even more), and you may start

producing small amounts of the first breastmilk, colostrum. You may also notice increased amounts of vaginal discharge.

- You may feel your baby’s head drop gradually lower into the pelvis and become ‘engaged’. When this happens, your bump might reduce a bit and you will feel less pressure on your ribs and diaphragm. This might, however, result in you feeling more pressure on your perineum. Some women feel like their baby is about to fall out! This won’t happen and is a normal sensation. Don’t be too concerned about whether or not baby is engaged either; for some women this happens weeks before delivery, but for others, baby doesn’t ‘drop’ until labour has started.
- As you approach term you may start to feel cramps. Although you might not be noticing them, you will likely be having Braxton Hix contractions, which are a bit like practice contractions.

You might notice your stomach becoming hard and even looking slightly dome-shaped. These can start as early 30 weeks, and while they are a good sign that your body is slowly preparing for the birth of your baby, they are not a sign that labour is starting.

AND WHAT ABOUT BABY?

- By now, baby is fully ready for the outside world. Her intestine is fully formed and contains a dark green sticky substance called meconium which is passed as your baby’s first poo.
- Your midwife will check how engaged your baby is by determining how much of her head she can feel before it emerges from the pelvis. To measure this, midwives assess how many ‘fifths’ of your baby’s head they can feel. So, if they can feel three-fifths of baby’s head in your abdomen, it is three-fifths ‘palpable’ or two-fifths ‘engaged’.
- Your midwife will be feeling

your baby at every appointment and if she suspects baby is breech (head up rather than down) she will suggest you go for a scan. We know it is safer for babies to be head down at birth, so she may well suggest an ECV (external cephalic version) where an obstetrician would try to turn the baby. Annoyingly, this procedure only works in about 50-60% of cases and if it’s not successful you will be advised that a c-section rather than a vaginal delivery is safest for your baby.

- Most babies at 40 weeks weigh around 3.5kg (8lb) although it is common for boys to weigh more than girls. The average head-to-toe length is 50cm. 

Dr Chiara Hunt and Marina Fogle are the founders of The Bump Class. Their book, *The Bump Class: An Expert Guide to Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond* is available now. thebumpclass.com