

Caroline Chisholm Society

# Child Development Guide

Your baby's journey from  
your womb to your world

Conception to Childbirth



**Caroline  
Chisholm**  
Society

# Your baby's journey from your womb to your world

## Conception to Childbirth



## The First Trimester

**(Conception to 12 weeks' gestation –  
first 3 months of pregnancy)**

### Conception

- Conception is the first part of your new baby's journey. Conception is when your egg and a sperm unite and become one cell, also known as fertilisation.
- The week after you have conceived, your fertilised egg begins to divide, this cell division results in a group of fertilised cells that is also known as a zygote.
- By the second week after conception this developing embryo implants itself into the wall of your uterus.



## Fetal Development

- From this point forward your baby is now a part of your body and being nourished by your health and wellbeing.
- The placenta is an amazing organ that is created solely to support the growth and development of your baby.
- Your baby receives nutrients from your body via the placenta to your baby. Many substances pass through the placenta and are filtered to ensure that your baby remains in a healthy environment.
- Any medications, drugs (legal and illegal), alcohol, smokes and air borne gases that have entered your body have a risk of affecting your baby – if you have any concerns see your general practitioner, obstetrician or local midwifery clinic for assessment and assistance.
- Your baby's development is rapid and by week four your baby's heart begins to beat.
- By the sixth week your babies face begins to form.
- By the eight week the arms and legs are forming, the baby is still in the embryonic stage. Your babies blood flow has started supporting all of the newly developing organs that are forming.
- By the ninth week the baby is known as a fetus. The developing fetus is growing rapidly, your babies spinal cord, nervous system, brain, lungs, heart and other organs are forming.
- By the 12th week your babies sex is able to be distinguished.

## Your health

- Morning sickness can start at any time during the stages of pregnancy therefore if you feel that you may be pregnant it is important to talk to a health professional.
- Even though it is often called morning sickness your symptoms may be in the morning, afternoon or evening with some signs and symptoms being present or no symptoms being present at all, every woman is different. Symptoms may include:
  - Missed periods – if you have irregular periods or are taking a contraceptive pill this sign might be misleading, talk to a health practitioner before stopping the pill.
  - Nausea and / or vomiting – at any time of the day or night, some women are very nauseous for many months however other women have minimal symptoms.
  - Fatigue / tiredness – as your body is adjusting to the change in hormones levels, your hormone levels increase – an increase in your progesterone levels can make you feel tired and lethargic. When you are over tired you can feel anxious and upset more than usual.
  - Increased urination – the increased blood flow in your body means that your kidneys have to adjust to the extra fluid amount within your body and this causes your kidneys to filter the extra fluid and therefore the extra urination.

# The Second Trimester

(Second 3 months of pregnancy – 13 to 27 weeks)

## Fetal Development

- Your baby is growing strong now and you may feel movement, at first you may not be certain if it is the baby or if it is your body. As time goes on you will recognise your baby's movements more. Your baby starts to make a fist, or grip her/his fingers together and move more freely.
- By 16 weeks your baby's skin is still transparent however fingernails and toenails are forming. Your baby can hear your voice from here on. Your baby has room to move freely and can turn about in the amniotic fluid that protects your baby's environment in utero.
- At approximately 20 weeks old your baby's heartbeat can be heard by a stethoscope depending on the position of the fetus and often the position of your body. Your baby can suck his/her thumb in utero and has eyelashes and eyebrows and hair forming.
- By the 24th week your baby is now a viable human being however still has a long way to go in being able to sustain life independently, your baby's lungs are still not well developed. The baby's eyes can open, your babies skin is covered with a protective layer of hair.



## Your Health

- The second trimester is an exciting time as your body starts to change and you will notice the changes in your body such as:
  - As the baby grows your pregnancy will be more apparent with your 'baby bump' becoming more noticeable.
  - You may experience back pain or abdominal pain due to the weight of your pregnancy and the changes in your body.
  - You may notice stretch marks on your abdomen, breasts, thighs or buttocks.
  - Darkening of the skin (areola) around your nipples.
  - You may experience oedema or swelling in your body especially your ankles.
- With any of the changes in pregnancy it is important to keep your antenatal care up to date so that the progress of your health and your baby's health can be monitored. These antenatal visits can help to care for the health and wellbeing of your health and offer assistance and guidance where necessary.

# The Third Trimester

(From 28 weeks to birth)

## Fetal Development

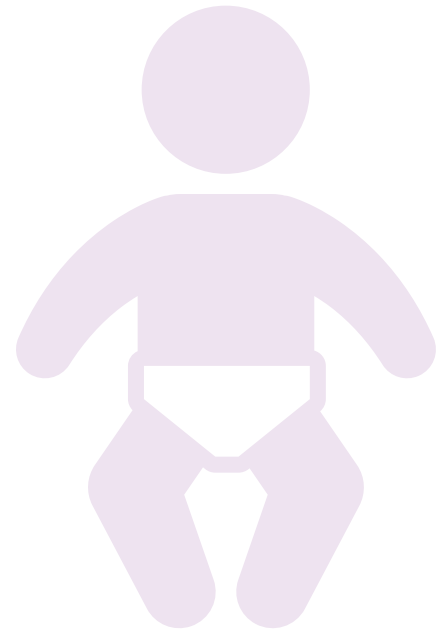
- From 28 weeks, onwards your baby is gaining body fat, the main organs continue to strengthen in preparation for your baby's journey into the world.
- From here on, as your baby grows the space begins to get tighter as the baby takes up more space in the uterus.

## Your Health

- The pregnancy has entered its final months and many women find it uncomfortable to get in and out of cars, lie on their backs and move quickly, this is normal however staying active physically and mentally is an important part of caring for yourself and your baby.
- Preparation for childbirth can sometimes commence with Braxton hix contractions. These are small and irregular contractions that happen in order to prepare your body for childbirth, some women can feel these contractions from approximately 26 weeks onwards, it is a very normal part of the preparation for birth.
- The contractions are brief and last approximately 30 seconds, some women do not experience these small contractions at all.

# Childbirth

- A woman can experience labour and childbirth in many forms. Often small contractions or back pain are not notable at the beginning. These contractions become more notable once they are more regular and are approximately 15 to 20 minutes apart.
- Contractions are an important preparation to childbirth as the contractions are preparing the cervix to open by stretching – this is called dilation.
- Once labour is fully established the contractions are closer together and can come every two to five minutes apart. At this time, you will continue to have contractions until your cervix is 10cm dilated. Your baby has been travelling down the birth canal along with the contractions, the baby's head is the first part of the body to present (in normal childbirth).
- The second stage of childbirth is the actual birth of your baby, with the third stage the delivery of the placenta which has supported the fetus for all the time through pregnancy.



## Your Baby

- From this moment, you have a child that will love you unconditionally.
- Most of the time after your baby's birth is taken up with learning new skills such as breastfeeding, nappy changing, bathing a new baby, dressing a new baby and coping with the physical and emotional changes in your own body.
- The support of family, friends and health professionals where needed or where possible is important to help you learn.

For further advice seek a Midwifery clinic, General Practitioner or antenatal clinic at your nearest local hospital.



# Our Values

Respect for Life

Compassionate  
and Caring

Social Justice

Empowerment of  
Women and Families

Recognition of Diversity

Accountability and  
Best Practice



**Caroline  
Chisholm**  
Society

977 Mt Alexander Road  
Essendon VIC 3040  
T: (03) 9361 7000  
W: [www.caroline.org.au](http://www.caroline.org.au)  
E: [secretary@caroline.org.au](mailto:secretary@caroline.org.au)