

Conception

Birth is a natural process, not a medical procedure. To give birth is to create life through a crucial nine-month period, and nurture it thereafter. (I always wonder why this 9 number is common in navagraha, the nine planets considered in Vedic astrology and 9 months of pregnancy). To a woman, it means a time of bodily and hormonal change, a time to familiarize herself with the new form that is preparing itself to chart a course on her and her partners DNA map.

This feature attempts to uncover these 9 months and provide answers to questions ranging from: " what are these pains, why do I feel so tired, what is labour and will my baby be healthy".

Modern medicine lays a lot of stress on diet, exercise & medicines during the 40-week period. However, mantra, mani & aushadhi can also help in easing the 36-40 week journey.

The basis of ayurvedic medicine lies in the fact that each & every plant on earth had medicinal properties. There is a hypothesis that there exists a vanaspati lok surrounding the earth to treat mankind. Hence, in Ayurved, the need to worship these plants that have enormous power to treat human ailments, holds prime importance in human life.

The First Month

Human life begins with the fusion of the egg & the sperm, & what started as the merging of 2 single cells develops into a full-blown human being within 36 to 40 weeks.

The actual journey of a life begins in the third week, when the egg & the sperm meet in the fallopian tube & together start the 7-10 day journey to the uterus. Cell division begins immediately and continues throughout this journey.

Week 4

During pregnancy, the first trimester is the most critical phase for both the mother & the child. The yolk sac that helps feed the baby, until the placenta is fully functional, appears in this week

During this period, a woman starts to feel tired, urinate more frequently, experience mood swings, feel nauseous & possible have tender or swollen breasts. Allopathic drugs are completely no-no, but Ayurved does have some medications that can fight nausea & would not harm the baby.

These include Yashtimadhu, Sag seeds, Kshirakakoli & Deodaru are readily available at ayurvedic stores. These ingredients should be mixed together in equal quantities. Add four times the amount of water & boil until one-fourth quantity is left. This concentrated extract should be taken once a day.

Mood swings can be controlled through controlling the mind. Mananat trayate eti mantra chanting a mantra enriches your mind- and, therefore, you can control your mind by either chanting or listening to a mantra.

The Second month

Week 5

The baby now has a head, tail & a heart that begins to beat.

To date, no medical surgery has been able to implant two hearts in a human being, except this supernatural power of motherhood. It is a miracle to have two hearts or Dauhrida in one body.

This is a critical phase & a woman feels like eating vague edible items (could be bhel or even a chili pickle). This is normal so not be alarmed, but do keep a check on the quantity.

Since the neuronal development of the baby starts here, doctors normally advise folic acid tablets. In the addition, the following Ayurvedic medicines can also be taken:

Apta, Black til, Manjistha & Shatavari. The extract of these ingredients should be prepared in the same manner as mentioned above. Shatavari needs special mention here as this medicine helps in Medhgnipushti (medha is intelligence).

Further, as the mind rests in the heart, chanting a mantra could also be very beneficial.

Week 6

This is a busy week for the baby as he starts to comprehend his surroundings with the development of his inner ear. The baby also breathes within you with formation of the larynx. Other organs like blood vessels, limbs, liver & pancreas also start to form.

The medicines mentioned in Week 5 also help in the development of other organs & should be continued until Week 8. The medication is crucial, as the fetus during this period. These medicines help rectify this hereditary abnormality.

As the baby's ears are being developed, the mantras can now be individualized.

Week 7

From this week, the baby starts sniffing around since the nasal pits start to develop (Prithvi mahabhut). Kidneys also begin to develop.

Week 8

The baby's now turning on his think tank as the brain begins to grow. The baby now becomes stronger, both mentally & physically, as the bones & joints too begin to form.

The Third Month:

Week 9

The baby's activity turns hectic as he starts to move in the uterine compartment. Elbows have now developed & the bones too have further hardened

You can start taking Bandgul, Kshirkakoli, White Upalsari & Black Upalsari in a similar pattern as mentioned before for 3 weeks. Continue to chant or listen to a mantra.

Week 10

The tail disappears!

The baby's eyes are now wide open. External ears & the upper lip are now completely formed.

Week 11

The iris starts to develop & fingernails appear.

If you have been seen pictures of babies at this stage, you will notice that the head is about $\frac{1}{2}$ the body size. This will change as the baby grows.

Week 12

The baby experiments with the reflexes & also practices movements in the digestive tract.

You can now hear your baby's heart beat with the help of a 'Doppler'. The rapid, racy sound is a pleasure to your ears. Your risk of a miscarriage is greatly reduced. Once you hear this sound.

The fourth Month:

Week 13

From this week, your baby can actually bite what you eat since all 20 teeth are formed & are waiting to emerge. The intestines develop & the peristaltic movements develop.

Your baby can enjoy sweet food now as the pancreas begins to secrete insulin (a hormone which controls blood glucose)

You can now take Dhamasa, White Upalsari, Rasna, Manjistha & Yashimadhu as mentioned before.

Week 14

The baby urinates into the amniotic fluid. It also practices 'breathing' the amniotic fluid in out of its lungs. Amniotic fluid is an amazing substance. It completely regenerates itself every three hours.

You can continue to have the same Ayurvedic medicines.

Week 15

The baby starts to suckle his thumb.

The skin is still very thin & you can see the blood vessels clearly underneath.

The scalp hair pattern is developing (Yasthimadhu helps in hair growth).

Week 16

Your baby is emptying his or her bladder every 40-45 minutes. Your baby's nails are well formed, and some babies even need to have trimmed at birth. (Keep your nail-cutter ready!)

The ears have also moved from the neck to the head.

The Fifth Month:

Week 17

The baby is forming brown fat deposits under the skin. This helps to maintain body temperature at birth.

From this week, the baby can actually react to loud sounds. This proves that chanting or hearing mantras helps in the development of the fetus.

You can now take Ringani, Dorali, Shivan, Kshirivrikshache ankur & bark and pure ghee in the same manner as mentioned above for next four weeks.

Week 18

The baby grows stronger as the bones are further hardened. Mothers keen on palmistry, please note that this is the week when the fingerprints start to develop.

Weeks 19

If the baby is a girl, her ovaries now contain primitive egg cells. Skin hair appears all over the baby's body. The fine hair remains until birth draws nearer & is even visible after birth.

Permanent teeth buds are being formed behind the already formed milk teeth buds.

Week 20

Congratulations! You are half way through your pregnancy.

Skin develops further in this week. Skin cells create vernix (a creamy white substance that is believed to help protect the baby in the uterus).

Sprouts and bark of Kshiriviksha (Vata Udumbara Ashwattha Plaksha and Vetas) and pure ghee ensure a healthy skin.

The woman should also consume adequate malai, the creamy layer of milk, which is similar to the topmost layer of our body, i.e. skin.

The Sixth Month:

Week 21

The baby now moves all over in the amniotic fluid. Towards the end of this week most babies are in the head-down position, except for a few who take a somersault at the last moment, leading to a breech delivery.

The ears have now almost fully developed. There is an interesting story, in relation to this, in the Mahabharat. Krishna was relating the

path to enter & come out of the Chakravyuha to his sister Subhadra. However, after hearing the first half (on how to enter), Subhadra fell asleep. As a result, both she and the baby within (Abhimanyu) did not hear the complete tale (the exit form Chakravyuha). Thus, during the actual war, Abhimanyu did enter the Vchakravuyha but had no way to come out.

Back to the basics: you can start taking Pithavan, Chikana, Shevega, Gokharu and Madhuparnika in the same way as mention above for further 4 weeks.

Week 22

The baby is getting bigger & continues to prepare for extrauterine life, and develops eyebrows.

Week 23

The baby's fingernails are almost fully formed and he continues to grow in preparation for the journey of birth. Meconium, the baby's first stool is developing.

Week 24

The baby is almost completely formed & is beginning to deposit brown fat on his body. The purpose of the brown fat is to retain body heat. Newborns cannot regulate body temperature in the beginning independently (this is particularly a problem with pre-mature babies.)

The seventh month

Week 25

The baby now becomes even stronger to face the outside world. The bones continue their ossification process, becoming harder.

You can now start taking Shringataak, lotus stem, grapes, Kasheruk, Yashtimadhu and Khanda-sharkara (solid sugar) in same manner as mentioned earlier.

Week 26

The baby can now hear you and those around you.

Although we can assume that the uterus is a quiet place, the baby is surrounded by noise for a long time. The baby can hear its mother's heartbeat, digestion and other body functions and external sounds too. In fact the mother can sense her baby jump at sudden, loud sounds.

The uterus also allows some light to be seen. So the baby is aware of lightness & darkness.

Week 27

The baby's skin is wrinkled. It will stay this way, until a few weeks after birth. His looks are assuming the look at birth!

Week 28

The baby's eyelashes develop, as subcutaneous fat is being deposited. If it is a baby boy, then his testis will probably begin descending (from abdomen to the scrotum).

The Eighth Month

Week 29

The baby is busy getting ready for his arrival. He begins to regulate his own temperature & the bone marrow is completely in charge of production of the red blood cells. The baby even urinates about a half litre of urine into the amniotic fluid everyday.

The baby's movements become restricted. Try to monitor the baby yourself, using foetal kick counts.

The medicines that can be taken at this stage are: Kavath, Bel, Ringani, Padval, Sugarcane, roots of Dorali & milk in the same manner as mentioned earlier for the next 4 weeks.

Week 30

The baby is very aware of his surrounding; the mother can now distinguish the baby's cycle of sleeping & being awake. Although it

usually seems as if the baby wants to sleep while you are awake & vice versa, this is not indicative of a newborn's sleep pattern.

Week 31

The baby's iris can now dilate & contract in response to light. Due to the deposits of white fat underneath the skin, the baby's skin is no longer red but pink.

The fingernails now reach the end of the fingers.

Week 32

The baby's movement will peak this week.

Most of the wrinkles disappear & hair growth on the head increases. Remember to do your fetal kick counts.

The Ninth Month

Week 33

The baby has surfactant (which helps it to breathe after birth) that coats the air passages in the lungs.

White Upalsari, Dhamasa, Shirkakoli & Yashtimadhu can be taken at this stage.

Week 34

The baby urinates almost a pint a day! Start shopping for nappies & diapers.

Week 35

While all organ systems have been present for a long time, they are now putting on the final touches before birth. The baby continues to grow & snuggle down into the lower portion of your body.

Week 36

The baby is now all set to face the world.

...the final countdown.

Week 37-40

You baby is practicing breathing by inhaling amniotic fluid. Sometimes the baby will even get hiccoughs! Medicines recommended at this stage are Kshirkakoli, Yashtimadhu, Shunthi and Deodharu in the same manner as mentioned earlier.

The baby may be gaining as much as 1 ounce (about 28 grams) a day at this point!

Did you know that the amniotic fluid is being continually replaced, even in labour, at the rate of every three hours? The origin of amniotic fluid still remains a mystery. However, it partially comprises of urine, sweat & other fluids from the baby.

Your baby is probably one of the 96% babies whose head is downward facing. The immune system is still immature & the baby receives antibodies from the placenta. Most of the body hair has fallen off the baby's body.

And after birth, they will receive antibodies continually when you nurse the baby.

The average baby will be about 7.5 pounds (3.4 kgs) and 20 inches long at birth.

After all these months of waiting, you have a beautiful bundle of joy in your arms.

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Note: all the recommended medicines should be taken after consulting a doctor.