

Third-Trimester Exams and Tests

Overview

At each prenatal visit in the third trimester, you'll be weighed, and your blood pressure and urine will be checked. Your doctor or midwife will measure the size of your uterus (fundal height) and feel your belly. This is done to check your baby's growth and position.

Late in the third trimester, your doctor or midwife will check to see how far your baby's head has dropped into your pelvis. If your baby is not head-down after 36 weeks, you may have a fetal ultrasound to confirm the position. Your care provider may try [version](#) to gently turn the baby into a head-down position.

Close to delivery, you may be checked to see if your cervix has begun to thin ([efface](#)) and open.

Third-trimester tests

Late in pregnancy, you may be checked for:

[Group B strep.](#)

A woman who has group B strep in her vagina can pass it to her baby during vaginal birth. This can cause severe problems for the baby. If you test positive for group B strep (or you are not tested), you will be treated with antibiotics during labor.

[Hepatitis B.](#)

If you test positive for hepatitis B, your baby will be treated within 12 hours after birth.

In the third trimester, your care provider may recommend an [amniocentesis](#) if:

- You are going to deliver early. This test can show if your baby's lungs are developed enough for delivery.
- There is a concern about infection in the [amniotic fluid](#).

Depression screening

Your care provider may check with you about your mood. It's important to find and treat depression. This can help prevent problems during pregnancy and after delivery.

If you have your first prenatal visit during your third trimester, you'll have more than these tests. Other tests you may have include tests for blood type, anemia, and [HIV](#). You may be screened for hepatitis B, sexually transmitted infections, or thyroid disease. You'll also be checked for past infections, such as syphilis or [rubella \(German measles\)](#).

Third trimester

The third trimester lasts from week 28 to the birth. Many women have some discomfort during this time as their belly gets bigger. You might have trouble getting comfortable so you can sleep. And you might have a few other aches and pains.

Common symptoms you may experience during the third trimester include:

- [Braxton Hicks contractions](#), which are "warm-up" contractions that do not thin and open the cervix (do not lead to labor).
- [Fatigue](#).
- [Back pain](#).
- [Pelvic ache and hip pain](#).
- [Hemorrhoids and constipation](#).
- [Heartburn](#) (a symptom of gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD).
- [Hand pain, numbness, or weakness \(carpal tunnel syndrome\)](#).
- Breathing difficulty, since your uterus is now just below your rib cage, and your lungs have less room to expand.
- [Mild swelling](#) of your feet and ankles (edema). Pregnancy causes more fluid to build up in your body. This, plus the extra pressure that your uterus places on your legs, can lead to swelling in your feet and ankles.
- [Difficulty sleeping](#) and finding a comfortable position. Lying on your back interferes with blood circulation, and lying on your stomach isn't possible. Sleep on your side, using pillows to support your belly and between your knees. Later in your pregnancy, it is best to lie on your left side. When you lie on your right side or on your back, the increasing weight of your uterus can partly block the large blood vessel in front of your backbone.
- Frequent urination, caused by your enlarged uterus and the pressure of the fetus's head on your bladder.

