**Stages of Pregnancy**

Now that you know the gestational age of your pregnancy, and have read the statement on genetics, you can, if you like, review a brief description of embryonic or fetal development for gestational age. However this is not required.

If you decide to terminate your pregnancy, the physician or physician’s assistant at the clinic or hospital will ask you to sign a statement verifying that you were given the opportunity to review this information on embryonic and fetal development at least 1 hour in advance of pregnancy termination.

We’ve listed each two-week period under the appropriate trimester (as defined under [South Carolina’s abortion law](http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t44c041.php%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)). Each two-week period is identified two ways:

* By *gestational age* (the length of time that has passed since the first day of your last normal menstrual period)
* By *conceptional age*, which is the time that has passed since actual conception. Conceptional age will always be about two weeks younger than gestational age. Under South Carolina’s abortion laws, trimesters are defined by conceptional age.

**First Trimester**

**1-2 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

Conception would not yet have occurred. Ovulation typically occurs about 14 days after the first day of a woman’s last normal menstrual period. The first day of the last normal period is considered Day One when figuring gestational age.

**3-4 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**0-2 weeks from conception**

During this stage, the egg is released from the ovary and is fertilized in the fallopian tube by the sperm. The fertilized egg starts to divide and forms a ball of cells. The ball of cells digs into the lining of the uterus.

* The ball of cells begins to form layers and fluid-filled spaces.
* The earliest part of the afterbirth begins to form.
* At this point in its growth, the ball of cells is called an *embryo*.
* The embryo grows to a length of about 1/100th of an inch (0.2 mm).

**5-6 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**3-4 weeks from conception**

During this stage, the embryo changes from a flat disc to a curved, C-shaped form. Organs begin forming. At this point, the menstrual period is missed.

* A tube forms along the embryo’s length. This will grow into the brain and spinal cord.
* The heart starts as a tube, which begins to beat as it grows.
* Simple structures form on the sides of the head. They will become eyes and ears as time goes on.
* Limb buds, which look like bumps, start to form. Later they will become arms and legs.
* The embryo grows to a length of ¼ inch (6 mm).

**7-8 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**5-6 weeks from conception**

At this stage, about half of the embryo’s length is the head, due to the rapid growth of the brain. The heart starts to form the normal four chambers. A heartbeat can be seen on ultrasound.

* The eyes and ears move toward their normal places on the head.
* Kidneys begin to form.
* “Rays” appear in the limbs, which will later form fingers and toes.
* The umbilical cord joins the embryo and the placenta (or afterbirth).
* The embryo is about ½ inch long (14 mm).

**9-10 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**7-8 weeks from conception**

The embryo changes shape as the face forms. It begins to straighten out from its C-shape. The small tail bud begins to go away. The basic parts of the brain and the heart are now formed. There are fingers on the hands. The toes are almost formed.

* There are eyelids over the eyes, but they cannot open yet.
* Nipples can be seen and the first hair buds form.
* Muscles begin to form. Early bones are formed. The arms can bend at the elbow.
* The intestines grow rapidly.
* The embryo is about 1 ¼ inches long (31 mm).

**11-12 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**9-10 weeks from conception**

By this time, all the main body parts are formed and present. The embryo now is called a “fetus”. Growth becomes most important. Fetal length is measured from the top of the head to the curve of the rump (crown-rump) length.

* The ears move up from around the neck to their normal position.
* Fetal movements and heartbeat can be seen on ultrasound.
* Various glands begin to work.
* The kidneys make urine.
* The crown-rump length is about 2 1/3 inches (61 mm).
* The fetus weighs less than 1 ounce (14 grams).

**13-14 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**11-12 weeks from conception**

At this point, the sex of the fetus can be seen. The fetus begins to swallow fluid from the amniotic sac (bag of waters). The fluid is replaced with urine made by the kidneys.

* Blood cells are made in the bone marrow.
* The neck can be clearly seen between the head and body.
* The crown-rump length is about 3 ½ inches (86 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 1 ½ ounces (45 grams).

**Second Trimester**

**15-16 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**13-14 weeks from conception**

At this stage, the fetal head is still large as the body straightens out. Its arms and legs are formed. They can move and bend.

* Sex organs are almost fully formed.
* Toenail and fingernail growth begins.
* The eyes move forward. The ears reach normal position. Now the face is well formed.
* The crown-rump length is about 4 ¾ inches (120 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 4 ounces (110 grams).

**17-18 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**15-16 weeks from conception**

At this stage, some women begin to feel the first fetal movements, called “quickening.” Growth begins to speed up. The legs grow longer, so the fetal head seems less large. Slow fetal eye movements can be seen by ultrasound.

* The bones gain calcium at a rapid rate.
* The ears stand out from the head.
* The crown-rump length reaches about 5 ½ inches (140 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 7 ounces (200 grams).

**19-20 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**17-18 weeks from conception**

Many women feel quickening by this time in pregnancy. The fetal skin is covered by something called *vernix caseosa*, which looks a little like cream cheese. This is about the halfway point of a normal pregnancy.

* A very fine hair called “lanugo” covers the fetal body.
* The crown-rump length is about 6 ¼ inches (160 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 7 ounces (320 grams).

**21-22 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**19-20 weeks from conception**

The skin is red and wrinkled. Blood vessels can be seen very clearly beneath it.

* Eyebrow and eyelashes start to form.
* Fingerprints begin to form.
* The crown-rump length is about 7 ¾ inches (190 mm).
* The fetus weighs just over 1 pound (460 grams).

**23-24 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**21-22 weeks from conception**

Fetal weight gain is fast during this time. Rapid eye movements can be seen by ultrasound.

* Lung growth reaches the point where some gas exchanges sacs are formed.
* The crown-rump length is 8 ½ inches (210 mm).
* The fetus weighs 1 pound, 6 ounces (630 grams).
* At this time, there is a chance the fetus may live if delivered.

**25-26 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**23-24 weeks from conception**

The lungs continue to grow, making a chemical called “surfactant.” Large amounts of surfactant are needed to keep the lungs open between breaths after birth.

* The fetus can suck on fingers or hands.
* The fetus will blink and act startled in response to loud noises near the woman’s belly.
* The crown-rump length reaches about 9 inches (230 mm).
* The fetus weighs a little less than 2 pounds (820 grams).

**Third Trimester**

**27-28 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**25-26 weeks from conception**

The lungs keep growing. The fetus keeps gaining weight. The brain grows and starts to do more complex tasks.

* The eyelids are not fused. Fetal eyes will open slightly.
* Eyelashes are formed.
* The crown-rump length reaches about 10 inches (250 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 2 pounds and 3 ounces (1000 grams).

**29-30 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**27-28 weeks from conception**

The fetal brain can now control body temperature and direct regular breathing. The fetus can weakly grasp at things. Different growth rates from one fetus to another become clear. Some grow more quickly than others.

* The eyes open wide.
* Toenails begin to form.
* Blood cells are made in the bone marrow.
* Fat begins to be put on under the skin.
* The crown-rump length is nearly 11 inches (around 270 mm).
* The fetus weighs almost 3 pounds (1300 grams).

**31-32 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**29-30 weeks from conception**

More fat is put on under the skin. The skin thickens. The fetus starts to look more like a newborn baby. The lanugo hairs on the face go away.

* The pupils of the eyes react to light.
* The crown-rump length is just over 11 inches (around 280 mm).
* The fetus weighs about 3 ¾ pounds (around 1700 grams).

**33-34 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**31-32 weeks from conception**

Fat is still put on under the skin as the fetus grows. The lungs keep growing and making more surfactant.

* The ear holds its shape when moved.
* Fetal muscle tone increases.
* The crown-rump length is just under 1 foot (around 300 mm).
* The fetus weighs over 4 ½ pounds (around 2100 grams).

**35-36 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**33-34 weeks from conception**

The lungs and the nervous system keep growing. Also, more fat is put on under the skin. The fetus begins looking chubby. Hair on the head begins looking normal.

* Testes in male fetuses start to move from the abdomen into the scrotum.
* The labia (vaginal lips) in female fetuses begin to cover the clitoris.
* The average crown-rump length is over a foot.
* The fetus weighs over 5 pounds (around 2500 grams).

**37-38 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**35-36 weeks from conception**

In almost all cases, fetal lungs are mature at this point. Lanugo hairs are almost all gone. The fetus may be born now or may stay in the womb while more fat is put on under the skin.

**39-40 Weeks (from start of last menstrual period)**

**37-38 weeks from conception**

This is full term in pregnancy. Most babies are born during this time.

* The average crown-rump length is over 14 inches (360 mm). The total length counting the legs is about 20 inches.
* On average, a full-term baby weighs 7 ½ pounds (3400 grams).