

# First month of pregnancy

Congrats on your pregnancy! It is said that pregnancy is the only moment when you truly fall in love with someone you haven't met yet. Like most women, you learned about your pregnancy through the rapid test done at home. Once you knew that you were pregnant, thousands of questions came to your mind. After all, you want to know everything about the small one inside you and ways to take care of someone you would not be able to see for some time to come.

We all know that pregnancy is a nine-month long journey. Doctors also divide pregnancy into 3-trimesters, as each trimester has special considerations. Perhaps the most important thing that every woman needs to understand is that pregnancy is a normal physiological state and not a disease condition. Thus, it is important to relax and not worry too much about it.

## Estimating pregnancy and due date

In most countries, including the US, the date of the last menstrual period (LMP) is considered to be the beginning of pregnancy. The due date is considered to be 280 days from the LMP, since it is assumed that women have 28 days in their cycles and ovulation happens on the 14<sup>th</sup> day. Thus, what a doctor may call a month of pregnancy would be equal to a two-week old embryo (the gestational age being two weeks). The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists considers that an ultrasound is the most accurate method to estimate gestational age.

## What happens during the first month?

During the first month of pregnancy, the fertilized egg slowly moves through the fallopian tubes toward the uterus. When the fertilized cell reaches the uterus, it is still very small, containing just about 100 cells and is called an embryo. Once in the uterus, it attaches itself to the wall of the organ, and this process is called implantation. The outer part of the embryo starts to connect with the blood vessels of the uterus by reaching out like roots. The second week of gestation is still a very early and critical time, as the intricate process of cell division in the embryo continues.

## What are the signs of pregnancy?

Not all women feel changes in the body during this early stage. But some may experience pain in the breast, mood swings, sensitivity to various odors, nausea, feeling tired, or urinating more often.

## Measures to take

This early stage is critical as the embryo is hugely susceptible to environmental toxins. Thus, it is vital to stop smoking (including passive smoking), pay attention to keeping a healthy diet, and try to eat balanced home-made food. If you are taking supplements like folic acid or multivitamins, you can continue them. But if you are taking medicine, it is best to immediately consult a specialist. If you are taking herbal supplements, it is best to stop them for the time being at least.

The first month is the time for future planning, getting a complete health check-up, and deciding the antenatal care. If the pregnancy is unplanned, you may have to go through many additional tests to make sure that you are in sound health.

*About the author:*

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Dr. Preet is a family physician, and he has been practicing medicine for the last 15 years. He has a particular interest in maternal and child health. He understands the importance of a healthy pregnancy and its long-term effects on a child's health. He is also a passionate writer.

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