



TEACHER GUIDE

Letters from Your Unborn Baby My Eighth Month



Dear MOM,

Wow, it is getting closer to my birthday! I am excited to meet you and to see what the world is like. Maybe you are excited for your pregnancy to end. Are you ever nervous about becoming a mother? It is OK if you are happy and scared all at the same time. This is a very exciting time for both of us. It will not be long now.

I want you to feel healthy, on the inside and the outside. Let's think about how you can keep yourself well. You can do a lot every day to stay healthy. You can eat right, exercise, bathe every day, brush and floss your teeth, get check-ups, and wear seatbelts. Wellness is your overall physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health.

ABOUT ME

I am about 18 inches long and I weigh between 4 and 5 pounds. My brain is growing rapidly. I am getting ready to be born. I'm almost done growing and developing. My lungs have the most developing still to do. If I were born now, I could survive, but I would need help until my lungs finish developing.

ABOUT YOU

You may be experiencing some shortness of breath. Don't worry, you and I are getting enough air. I am pressing against your chest, crowding your lungs. You will feel relief after "lightening" occurs. Lightening is when I move into your pelvis to get ready for birth. When it is hard for you to breathe, prop yourself on a couple of pillows when you sleep. You can also try lying on your side with a pillow under the upper knee to provide support.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is wonderful and amazing and a lot of changes take place in your body. Some mothers-to-be have discomforts and complications. If you understand why these problems occur, it will help ease your mind.

CONSTIPATION and HEMORRHOIDS

Constipation is when you can't have a bowel movement. During pregnancy, hormones, and my position may give you some discomfort. We already discussed how exercise, like walking or swimming can help keep your digestive tract running smoothly. Another solution to ease constipation is to eat fiber-rich foods and drink lots of water. Fiber helps move food through your intestines and out of your body. Eating fiber and drinking lots of water will also help hemorrhoids.

TREATMENT: The best treatment is PREVENTION.

These suggestions may help to ease constipation and hemorrhoids:

- 1) Drink plenty of liquids - at least 8 glasses a day! Water, fruit juices and soups are especially good.
- 2) Eat raw fruits and vegetables. Include skins and seeds when possible.
- 3) Choose whole grain breads and cereals like oatmeal, bran, shredded wheat, whole wheat, wheat germ and brown rice.
- 4) Eat prunes or figs. Drink prune juice.
- 5) Eat meals at about the same time each day.
- 6) Exercise daily. Walking is one of the best exercises.

Some foods high in fiber include: whole grain breakfast cereals, potatoes with the skin, carrots, broccoli, peppers, peas, beans, popcorn, bran muffins, low-fat granola, oatmeal, seeds, cabbage, whole wheat crackers and fruit. When you begin adding fiber to your diet, add it in small doses at first to prevent stomach pains.

DRINKING FLUIDS

It is important to drink plenty of water, at least 8-10 glasses of caffeine-free, non-alcoholic liquids every day. Your body will need extra water to keep the fiber moving through your system. It is best to drink water, or milk or fruit juices to give me extra vitamins and minerals.

HEARTBURN

You may have heartburn in the last part of your pregnancy. I am growing and pushing on your organs, especially your stomach. This makes the food move back up out of your stomach and you can feel burning and pressure.

Here are some ways to prevent heartburn:

- 1) Eat small meals, about 5 or 6 a day.
- 2) Avoid spicy, rich, and fried foods.
- 3) When eating, relax and eat slowly.
- 4) If a food bothers you, don't eat it.
- 5) Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- 6) Don't lie down flat after you eat.
- 7) Prop your head and shoulders up when you need to rest.
- 8) Never take antacids unless your doctor okays them.

EDEMA - NOT SUCH A SWELL THING

Edema is water retention. You retain water when the water from inside your cells leaks out and stays in your tissues. Edema can also happen when I press on your blood vessels, making it difficult for your blood to move from your heart to your legs and feet. When you have edema, your hands and feet may swell up. This swelling disappears when your feet and legs are elevated. You might feel more comfortable in a larger size of shoes.

Talk with our doctor if your edema is extreme. For example, call your doctor if you are retaining so much water that your weight goes up by more than 2 pounds a week. This can be a sign that you have other health problems.

SALT

Sometimes salt in your food can make you retain water and cause mild edema. You can control this mild edema by not adding salt to your food or not eating foods that have lots of salt in them. Foods like cured meats, luncheon meats, cheeses, processed foods, soup, and soy sauce are high in salt.

GETTING READY FOR ME

Now is a good time to start making a list of things you need before I arrive. It is also important to keep a list of questions for our doctor since you are getting close to your delivery date. I want you to be comfortable and feel relaxed about your delivery, so start preparing for the big day.

SOME THINGS I NEED:

- baby bed
- blankets
- baby clothes
- 3-4 dozen diapers
- night shirts
- under shirts
- booties/socks/shoes
- baby car seat
- breast pads, if breastfeeding
- bottles, if bottle feeding
- formula, if formula feeding

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK OUR DOCTOR

1. How long will you stay in the hospital?
2. Should you expect a vaginal or cesarean section delivery?
3. What medications will be used during labor?
4. Can we sleep in the same room at the hospital?
5. What if our doctor is not "on call" when you go into labor?
6. Who can visit us?
7. How soon after delivery can you breastfeed me?
8. How can you tell if you are going into labor?

THE GAME OF LIFE

There are a lot of decisions for you to make before I arrive. I wish I could talk so we could make decisions together. But I am too little now, and besides I believe in you.

You are not the only person who is getting anxious for my arrival. I'm getting anxious, too! I'm glad that we only have one month left.

Love,
Your Baby

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