

Pregnancy

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Pregnancy

Identifies major events of pregnancy and childbirth, and describes major developmental events up to the eighth week after fertilization.

Pregnancy



[Figure1]

Why is it called labor?

So...the mother carries the developing baby for nine months. We know about the tremendous growth and [development](#) of the embryo and fetus. Then comes labor.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

Pregnancy is the carrying of one or more offspring from [fertilization](#) until birth. It is the [development](#) of an embryo and fetus from the expectant mother's point of view.

The Mother's Role

The pregnant mother plays a critical role in the development of the embryo and fetus. She must avoid toxic substances such as alcohol, which can damage the developing offspring. She must also provide all the nutrients and other substances needed for normal growth and development. Most nutrients are needed in greater amounts by a pregnant woman, but some are especially important, including **folic acid** (vitamin B₉), calcium, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids.

Childbirth

Near the time of birth, the **amniotic sac** breaks in a gush of fluid. Often when this occurs, women say that their "[water](#) broke." **Labor** usually begins within a day of this event. Labor involves **contractions** of the muscular walls of the uterus, which cause the **cervix** to dilate. With the mother's help, the contractions eventually push the fetus out of the uterus and through the vagina. After birth, the **umbilical cord** is cut. The baby can breathe air now that it is no longer in amniotic fluid.

Summary

- A pregnant woman should avoid toxins and take in adequate nutrients for normal fetal growth and development.
- During childbirth, contractions of the uterus push the child out of the body.

Review

1. What causes the fetus to be pushed out of the uterus during birth?
2. Why is the umbilical cord cut before a newborn has started to breathe on its own?

Vocabulary

Language: English ▾

Term	Definition
cervix	lower, narrower end of the uterus where the baby is pushed through and out of the body during birth.
contraction	process where muscles of the uterus push the fetus out of the uterus and through the vagina.
folic acid	vitamin B ₉ ; vitamin needed in greater amounts by a pregnant woman.
labor	process during childbirth that involves contractions of the muscular walls of the uterus, which cause the cervix to dilate.
pregnancy	carrying of one or more offspring from fertilization until birth.
umbilical cord	long tube containing two arteries and a vein that connects a fetus to the placenta.

1.0 REFERENCES

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