

# TRIMESTER 2:

## 13 - 27 Weeks

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The second trimester is often referred to as the "golden trimester" due to the reduction in symptoms for many women, along with a noticeable boost in energy. During this time, the baby's growth and development accelerate, and many mothers begin to feel fetal movement, known as quickening, for the first time.

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

- As your uterus expands to accommodate your growing baby, your belly becomes more prominent.
- Feeling your baby move for the first time, typically between 18 and 22 weeks, is one of the most magical milestones. These gentle flutters or kicks reflect your baby's increasing strength and activity.
- The placenta has fully taken over the role of delivering oxygen, nutrients, and hormones to your baby while removing waste, providing essential support for their rapid growth.
- The baby's organs and body systems, including the heart, lungs, and nervous system, undergo critical refinement and maturation, laying the foundation for survival outside the womb.
- Insulin Resistance: Insulin production increases, and insulin resistance starts to rise, peaking around the late second to mid-third trimester. This is a normal shift that helps direct nutrients towards fetal growth.
- Continued Growth: The fetus experiences significant development, with bones, organs, and systems maturing. Maternal tissues also continue to adapt and expand.

## COMMON SYMPTOMS AND HOLISTIC MANAGEMENT

- Round Ligament Pain: Round ligament pain is a common discomfort caused by the stretching of the ligaments that support your uterus. It often presents as sharp or aching sensations on one or both sides of your abdomen, particularly during sudden movements.
  - Focus on gentle prenatal yoga poses like cat-cow, child's pose, and pelvic tilts to reduce tension in the lower abdomen and pelvis.
  - Incorporate targeted stretches for the hip flexors and pelvic region. A seated butterfly stretch or side-lying stretches can ease strain.
  - Belly bands provide gentle compression and support for your growing belly, helping to reduce strain on the round ligaments.
  - Applying a warm (not hot) compress to the area can promote muscle relaxation and reduce discomfort.
  - Avoid sudden twisting or bending; instead, move more slowly and deliberately to prevent triggering pain.
- Heartburn: Heartburn occurs as hormonal changes relax the lower esophageal sphincter, allowing stomach acid to flow back into the esophagus. As your baby grows, the upward pressure on your stomach can exacerbate this symptom.
  - Eating smaller portions throughout the day reduces the likelihood of acid reflux.
  - Avoid trigger foods. Common culprits include spicy or acidic foods (like tomatoes and citrus), caffeine, and carbonated beverages. Observe your own triggers and adjust accordingly.
  - Avoid lying down or reclining for at least 2–3 hours after eating to minimize reflux.
  - Use a wedge pillow or elevate the head during sleep of your bed to keep stomach acid from moving upward.
  - Chew on a piece of ginger root or sip ginger tea to aid digestion and soothe irritation.
  - Use papaya enzymes to support digestion and balance stomach acid levels. Dilute 1 teaspoon in a glass of water and drink after meals.

- Swelling/Edema: Swelling in the feet, ankles, and hands, also known as edema, is common during the second trimester as blood volume increases and circulation slows slightly due to hormonal changes and pressure from the growing uterus.
  - Aim for 80–100 ounces of water daily to encourage fluid balance. Add electrolytes, like LMNT or Needed, to support hydration and reduce fluid retention.
  - Incorporate gentle exercises like walking, swimming, or prenatal yoga to promote circulation and prevent fluid pooling in the extremities.
  - Rest with your legs elevated above your heart to encourage blood flow and reduce swelling.
  - Use maternity compression socks or stockings to minimize swelling and improve circulation, especially if you're on your feet for extended periods.
  - Dandelion tea is a natural diuretic that can gently support kidney function and reduce water retention.
  - Lymphatic Drainage Massage: Gentle, rhythmic massage techniques can stimulate lymph flow and reduce swelling. Consult a trained prenatal massage therapist for guidance.
  - Pro Tip: Swelling is normal, but contact your healthcare provider if it becomes severe, occurs suddenly, or is accompanied by symptoms like headaches or high blood pressure, as these could indicate preeclampsia.
- Constipation: Constipation often arises during pregnancy due elevated hormone levels, especially progesterone, the uterus physically obstructing the colon, decreased activity levels, lower levels of motilin, enhanced absorption of water and electrolytes.
  - Aim for 30+ grams of fiber daily. Include foods like:
    - Fruits: Prunes, pears (with skin), berries, and kiwi (with skin).
    - Vegetables: Broccoli, spinach, and carrots.
    - Seeds: Chia seeds and flaxseeds (soaked or ground for better digestion).
    - Legumes: Lentils, beans.
    - MCT oil: 1 tablespoon in coffee or blended into a [smoothie](#).
  - Ensure adequate consumption of health fats (fish, avocado, nuts, seeds, olive oil) to ensure lubrication of the intestines and proper bile flow.

- Drink 80–100 ounces of water daily to soften stools. Add electrolytes (LMNT, Needed) and incorporate hydrating beverages like bone broth or teas.
- Exercising regularly (recommend 30 minutes per day) such as strength training, walking, prenatal yoga, or swimming can improve bowel motility.
- Magnesium citrate can act as a gentle laxative by drawing water into the intestines. Please note, OBs are particular about this supplement, please consult your OB before beginning.
- Include probiotic-rich foods like yogurt, kefir, or miso, or consider a high-quality [prenatal probiotic supplement](#) to support gut microbiome health.
- A warm glass of water (with or without lemon) in the morning can help stimulate digestion and encourage regularity.
- Consider using a squatty potty to support pelvic floor muscles and help achieve an optimal position for bowel movements by aligning the rectum for easier elimination.
- Hemorrhoids: Hemorrhoids, caused by increased pressure on rectal veins and straining during bowel movements.
  - Prevent constipation by using the above techniques to reduce straining.
  - Witch hazel's anti-inflammatory and astringent properties can soothe irritation and reduce swelling. Opt for unscented, alcohol-free wipes like [Tucks](#) or DIY pads soaked in pure witch hazel.
  - Soak the affected area in a warm water sitz bath for 10–15 minutes daily to relieve pain, promote healing, and reduce inflammation.
  - Apply cold packs wrapped in a cloth for immediate relief from swelling.
  - Apply topical aloe vera gel or coconut oil for a soothing relief.
  - Limit processed or refined foods, which can worsen constipation and strain.
  - Gentle pelvic floor exercises promote blood flow and strengthen pelvic muscles, which can reduce hemorrhoid symptoms and prevent worsening.
  - Avoid sitting or standing for prolonged periods to reduce pressure on rectal veins.
  - If hemorrhoids cause significant pain or bleeding, consult your healthcare provider for pregnancy-safe treatments, such as medicated ointments or suppositories.

## NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Macronutrients:**

- Research suggests moderately lower carbohydrates, higher protein, and higher healthy fats to better support blood sugar management and nutrient needs.
- Prioritize whole, unprocessed foods can naturally shift macronutrient intake in a favorable direction and provide a wider range of essential vitamins and minerals

- **Energy:**

- Energy demands increase by 300–500 kcal per day. Needs can vary based on individual factors (ie: activity level). This does not mean "eating for two," but rather incorporating nutrient-dense, calorie-rich foods to support maternal and fetal growth.
  - Examples: Add a handful of nuts, a smoothie with full-fat yogurt and fruit, or a slice of avocado toast topped with a boiled egg.

- **Protein:**

- Aim for 1.22 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day to meet increased demands for fetal growth and maternal tissue expansion. For most women, this translates to approximately 80–100 grams daily.
  - Sources: Grass-fed beef, organ meats, poultry, fatty fish, eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, legumes

- **DHA:**

- DHA is critical for the baby's brain and eye development. Aim for 200–300 mg DHA daily from sources like wild-caught salmon, sardines, and anchovies, or algae-based supplements for vegetarians.

- **Nutrient-Dense Snacks:**

- Hard-boiled eggs with sliced cucumber and hummus.
- Greek yogurt topped with berries and chia seeds.
- Trail mix made with pistachios, dried apricots (iron-rich), and dark chocolate pieces.
- Bone broth with a side of whole-grain crackers and cheese.

## LIFESTYLE (SLEEP/EXERCISE) RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Exercise: continue with daily exercise - ideally 30 minutes per day. Energy levels may be more stable in the second trimester compared to the first trimester allowing for more consistent physical activity.
- Sleep: Hormonal changes can cause sleep disruptions. Using pillows for support and practicing good sleep hygiene can help. Aim for 7-9 hours per night.

## NORMAL VISIT CADENCE AND SCREENINGS

- Prenatal visits are typically scheduled every four weeks during the second trimester.
- Key screenings:
  - 20-Week Anatomy Ultrasound: A detailed scan to assess your baby's growth and organ development.
  - Blood pressure is checked at each prenatal visit to monitor for any signs of hypertension, preeclampsia.
- Labs:
  - Complete blood count (CBC) to check for anemia.
  - Iron and Anemia Markers: It's standard to re-check these markers (CBC and others as needed) during the second trimester to monitor iron levels and address any potential anemia.
  - Vitamin D and other micronutrients as needed.
  - Thyroid function tests if abnormal earlier in pregnancy.
  - Gestational Diabetes Screening: Oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) between 24–28 weeks.
  - Urinalysis to check for UTIs, glucose, and protein levels.

## FETAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- Your baby grows significantly during the second trimester, reaching about 14–15 inches in length and weighing around 1.5 pounds by week 27. This rapid growth highlights the importance of meeting nutritional needs and staying active.