

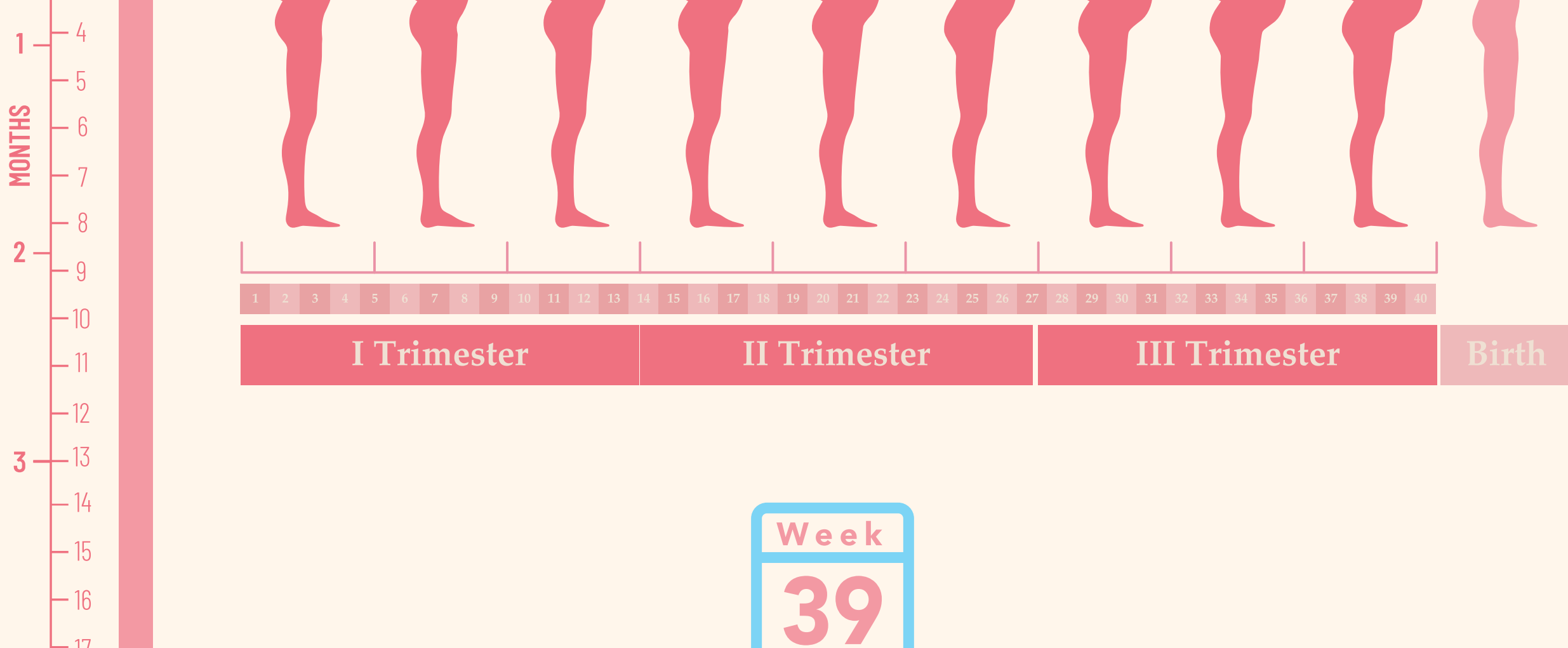
# Your pregnancy week by week: weeks 39 & 40



Pregnancy typically lasts 40 weeks, with most women going into labor a week before or after their due date. That means it could happen at any time!

The wait is almost over. You'll be able to meet your baby in a matter of days. It's been a long road, but the real adventure begins when your child is born.

Here's what to expect in weeks 39 and 40.



Week 39

## The 39<sup>th</sup> Week of Pregnancy

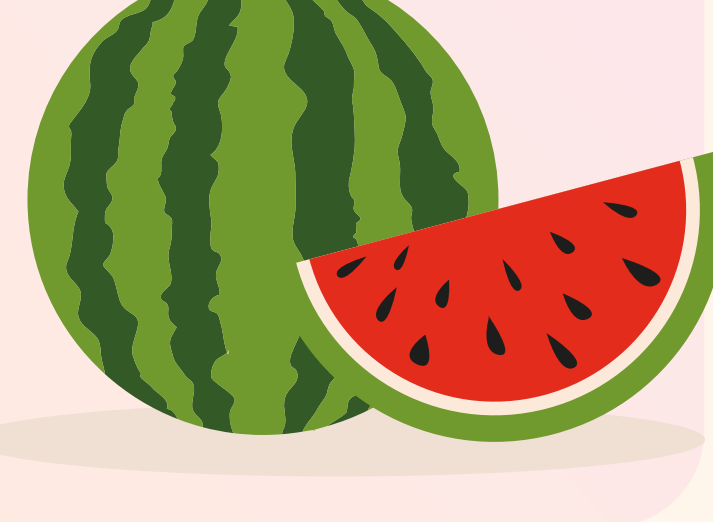
### What is happening with your baby at 39 weeks pregnant<sup>1,2</sup>?

- Your baby's skin was nearly translucent a few weeks ago, but now it's building a **tougher new covering that appears more solid**. This is more effective at safeguarding their internal organs and **regulating their body temperature**.

- The skin will be **covered with vernix**, a white waxy material that means vanish in Latin. This creamy covering protects their skin while also easing the baby through the birth canal. You'll have to wait and watch if your baby comes out covered in it or if it's mainly gone by the time they emerge.

### How big is your baby when you are 39 weeks pregnant?

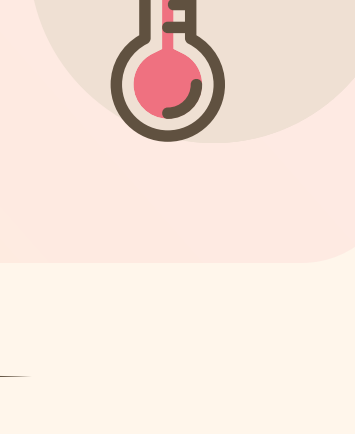
Your baby is approximately **the length of 5 courgettes** and **the weight of a mini watermelon**.<sup>1</sup>



### Your Body<sup>1</sup>

- 9 signs you shouldn't ignore**  
If you get any of the following signs, then treat **it as an emergency and call your doctor or hospital**:

- Bleeding from your vagina.
- Brown or pink discharge.
- Severe itching, particularly at night.
- A terrible headache that won't go away.
- Vision problems (blurring, light sensitivity, seeing spots or flashing lights).
- Pain just below the ribs.
- Extreme swelling of the feet, ankles, hands and face.
- Persistent stomach pains.
- A high temperature (**above 37.5 degrees C**) with no other flu or cold symptoms.



Week 40

## The 40<sup>th</sup> Week of Pregnancy

The wait will soon be over. You'll meet your baby in a few days. It's been a long road, but the true adventure begins when your child is born.<sup>3</sup>

### What is happening with your baby when you are 40 weeks pregnant<sup>4</sup>?

- Expect your baby's head to be deformed from the birth canal and coated in vernix and blood for a while, so don't expect it to be picture perfect right away.

- Discolorations, dry spots, and rashes may appear on your baby's skin. All of this is very normal.

- Your health care practitioner will suction mucus from your baby's mouth and nose shortly after birth, and you'll hear that long-awaited first cry

- Your infant will be placed on your tummy after that, and the umbilical cord will be cut frequently by the baby's father if he chooses to do so!

- Your baby's vital signs and alertness will be assessed through a series of rapid screening procedures.

- After that, your child will be weighed and measured.

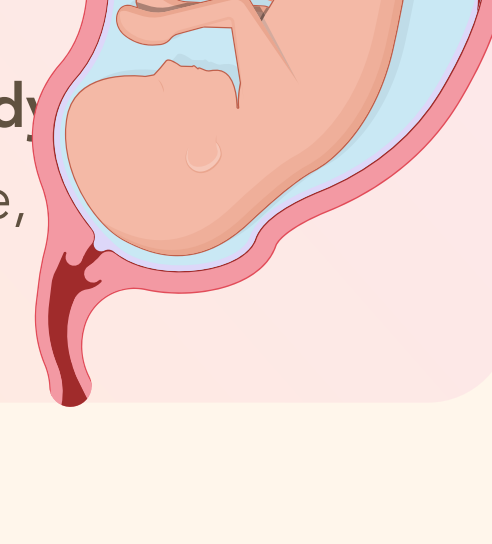
### How big is your baby when you are 40 weeks pregnant?

Your baby is approximately **the size of 2 Romano peppers** and **the weight of a small pumpkin**.<sup>3</sup>



### Your Body<sup>4</sup>

- There are three stages of labor. When **you feel contractions and your cervix opens until it's 10cm across**, you're in the first stage (fully dilated). The initial stage lasts 6-12 hours, or **less if you've already had kids**. The baby is delivered in the second stage, and **the placenta is removed in the third stage**.



## Tips for making your pregnancy better

- These suggestions may help you feel more in control of your pain and manage it:**<sup>3</sup>

- If your contractions begin at night, try to sleep as much as possible through them — the rest will help you prepare for the delivery, and your cervix will dilate while you sleep.
- If your contractions start during the day, stay upright and active to assist the baby move down and open up your cervix. This may help to hasten your labor and lessen the need for painkillers.
- Experiment with different positions. Rock on a birth ball or lean on your partner's neck with your arms around his or her neck. Simply keep moving!
- Take a warm bath or shower — it's a tried-and-true pain-relieving therapy that's been around for thousands of years.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Now is the time to work on your breathing methods. Inhale deeply through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Maintain a relaxed jaw.
- Request a massage from your partner and include them in your labor. Having their encouragement and reassurance will stimulate your body to manufacture more endorphins, which are natural pain relievers.
- To keep your energy levels up, eat something healthy like a banana or low-fat yogurt. Avoid fatty foods because they may make you sick, and sweet foods, since they will only give you a temporary boost before you crash.
- Maintain your composure and carry on. You will manage your labor and pain much better if you are relaxed than if you are stressed.

- Call your hospital or doctor if your contractions last at least 60 seconds and come every 5 minutes.**

### References:

1. NHS. Start 4 life. Week-by-week guide to pregnancy. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy/week-by-week/3rd-trimester/week-39/#anchor-tabs> Last accessed at: 21.11.2021

2. Nemours KidsHealth. Parents: Week 39. Available at: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/week39.html> Last accessed at: 21.11.2021

3. NHS. Start 4 life. Week-by-week guide to pregnancy. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/start4life/pregnancy/week-by-week/3rd-trimester/week-40/#anchor-tabs> Last accessed at: 21.11.2021

4. Nemours KidsHealth. Parents: Week 40. Available at: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/week40.html> Last accessed at: 21.11.2021