Anatomy of Pregnancy.

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OVERVIEW

The emergence of the 'baby bump,' which forms to accommodate the baby growing in the uterus, is one of the most noticeable changes in a pregnant woman's physique. Because the uterus' major job throughout pregnancy is to house and nurture your growing baby, it's critical to understand its shape and function, as well as the changes you can expect during pregnancy.

WHAT IS THE APPEARANCE OF THE UTERUS?

The uterus (also known as the 'womb') is pear-shaped and contains a thick muscular wall. The fundus (at the top of the uterus), the main body (called the corpus), and the cervix make up the uterus (the lower part of the uterus). Ligaments in the center of the pelvis, behind the bladder, and in front of the rectum keep it in place with tough, flexible tissue.

There are three layers to the uterine wall. The endometrium, a thin layer on the inside that responds to hormones and sheds during menstruation, causes menstrual bleeding. A muscular wall makes up the middle layer. The uterus's outer layer is a thin layer of cells.

The uterus of a non-pregnant woman can vary in size. The average uterine length in a woman who has never been pregnant is about 7 centimetres. In a woman who is not pregnant but has previously been pregnant, this grows to about 9 centimetres. The size and form of the uterus can alter over time and with the number of pregnancies.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE UTERUS DURING PREGNANCY?

The size of a woman's uterus will substantially rise during pregnancy as the baby grows. The fundal height, or the distance between the pubic bone and the top of the uterus, is one way to determine growth. From 24 weeks onwards, your fundal height will be measured by your doctor (GP), obstetrician, or midwife at each antenatal visit. If your doctor or midwife has concerns about your baby's growth, regular ultrasound monitoring may be recommended.

The size of a pregnant woman's uterus can be affected by a variety of factors, including fundal height. Women who are carrying more than one kid, are overweight or obese, or have specific medical disorders, for example, may have a varied fundal height. It's also crucial to empty your bladder before each measurement because a full bladder will impact fundal height measurement. A smaller fundal height than expected could indicate that the baby is growing slowly or that there is little amniotic fluid. If this is the case, your doctor will keep a close eye on it. A bigger than expected fundal height, on the other hand, could indicate that the baby is larger than typical, necessitating additional monitoring.

The uterus can apply pressure on the other organs of a pregnant woman's body as it expands. The uterus, for example, can press against the bladder nearby, increasing the need to urinate.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE UTERUS AFTER BIRTH?

The uterus will contract again after the baby is born to allow the placenta, which feeds the baby during pregnancy, to depart the woman's body. This is sometimes referred to as the 'postpartum period.' These contractions are less intense than those experienced during labour. The uterus remains constricted after the placenta is delivered to help prevent severe bleeding termed as 'postpartum haemorrhage.'

After the birth, the uterus will continue to undergo contractions, particularly during breastfeeding. This tightening and constricting of the uterus will feel similar to period cramps and is referred to as 'afterbirth pains.'

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