

5 Unexpected Ways Childbirth Changes Your Body

1. SKIN

As you can imagine, the skin has to change a lot (especially the stomach) as your pregnancy progresses. Some people are blessed with skin that bounces back, some find products to help reduce or eliminate stretch marks, or you might end up having them for the rest of your life.

It's basically left up to genetics, and there's not much you can really do about it. Stretch marks happen when the collagen and elastin in the skin stretch to the point of no return.

How has your skin changed?

2. HAIR

I normally prefer to wear my hair short. During my first pregnancy, my hair grew tremendously. It was so healthy. So, I just let it grow. During my second pregnancy, it became coarser and was more difficult to manage. I guess as you get older, as hormones change, and with subsequent pregnancies, the effect on your hair can be different.

Most women have fuller, shinier locks during pregnancy. After delivery, your hair should return to normal. Higher estrogen levels keep your hair from falling out at its normal rate.

After pregnancy, when estrogen levels drop and return to normal, your hair may shed, within one to five months following pregnancy. Your hair will likely return to normal within 6-12 months.

How has your hair changed?

3. FEET

My mom told me that when she was pregnant with me that her feet grew a size and a half – she went from an 8-1/2 to 10. Thankfully I didn't have THAT experience. I already wore a size 9-1/2 to 10 before both pregnancies!

We've all heard about how swollen the feet and ankles get during pregnancy, but there is a chance that your shoe size may change, too. Changes in your hormone levels cause muscles and ligaments to also change in preparation for labor. This results in inflammation in the lower extremities.

How have your feet (or other areas of swelling) changed?

4. FERTILITY

Although there is an old wives' tale (or urban legend) that you can't get pregnant right after having a baby or while you are breastfeeding, you can.

Actually, many say that the trick to getting pregnant is – having a baby. Doctors say you are much more fertile right after giving birth, especially if you are not breastfeeding or do it minimally.

So, be sure that you're taking precautions if you are not planning to get pregnant right away. Every woman's hormone levels will fluctuate differently.

After you had your first baby (or subsequent one), did you find your fertility changed?

5. BLADDER

During pregnancy, you'll be running in and out of the bathroom like crazy, but bladder control issues can follow you after birth, too.

A weak bladder occurs when the muscles in the pelvic floor are damaged, and this happens during pregnancy and childbirth due to the hormonal changes and extra weight.

Don't be surprised if you find yourself literally RUNNING to the bathroom more often after your baby is born, too. This condition is also referred to as stress urinary incontinence (SUI), and it could cause sudden release of urine while participating in everyday activities like laughing or sneezing.

Has your continence changed?