37 weeks

Congratulations! You have reached full term. Babies born after 37 weeks have all of their primary body systems fully developed. Over the next few weeks, your baby will put on more weight, gaining about a half ounce each day. By 37 weeks, your baby will be around 6½ pounds in weight and will be around 19 inches long (about the length of a bunch of swiss chard). Now is the time to make sure you have a labor bag packed and ready.

Labor signs
If you experience any of these, call the OB triage center at (573) 499-6100 or come to the hospital for a labor check:
• Trick or gush of fluid like your water has broken.
• Contractions, which are strong enough to make you stop walking or talking, and come at regular intervals.

Stages of labor
Early labor – regular contractions increasing in intensity and frequency.
• Often the longest part of labor, so try to stay relaxed by walking, taking a shower, or changing positions often.
• It’s okay to stay at home for early labor, as long as your water has not broken.

Active labor
Regular contractions that are every 3 to 5 minutes apart and your cervix is actively dilating.
• It’s time to go to the hospital when your contractions are stronger, closer together, and regular.
• Stage 2 of labor is pushing and delivery of baby.
• Stage 3 of labor is delivery of the placenta.

Cervical checks
• Your health care provider may check your cervix in the clinic to determine a baseline for when you go into labor.
• This exam will be repeated during labor to determine how labor is progressing.
• The cervical exam is made up of 3 parts: dilation, effacement, and station.
• Dilation is the diameter that the cervix is open; it ranges from 0 to 10 cm.
• Effacement is how thin the cervix becomes; it ranges from 0 to 100%.
• Station is baby’s position in relation to your pelvis; it ranges from -3 to +3.

What to pack
• Comfortable clothes for you to wear after delivery and for going home from the hospital
• Photo outfit for your baby and going home outfit for your baby
• Car seat
• Cell phone and charger
• Camera
• Toiletries
• Nursing bra or tank top
• Slip on shoes (your feet may swell after delivery)

The hospital will provide diapers, wipes, and clothes for your baby while in the hospital. The hospital also has undergarments and products to care for mom, and basic toiletries like soap and shampoo, if needed.

If your health care provider recommended that you don’t breastfeed, or you have chosen to feed your baby formula, formula will be provided for you while you are in the hospital. You do not need to bring your own formula to the hospital. You will, however, need to make arrangements to have formula at home after you leave the hospital. If you do not believe you can afford formula for your baby, let your provider know so that we can involve social work before you have your baby.

Final thoughts for delivery
At this point, you should know what your plans are for delivery. If you are preparing a birth preference, this should be finalized. Let your prenatal care provider know if you have any last minute questions. This is a great time to discuss your birth preferences with your provider if you haven’t done so already.