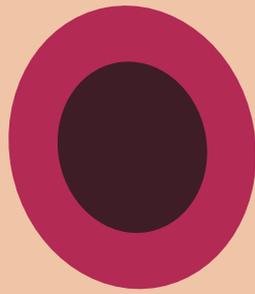


# THE GESTATION PERIOD

adapted from the Relationships  
and Sexuality Education (RSE)  
classroom materials.

**Dr. Seline Keating**









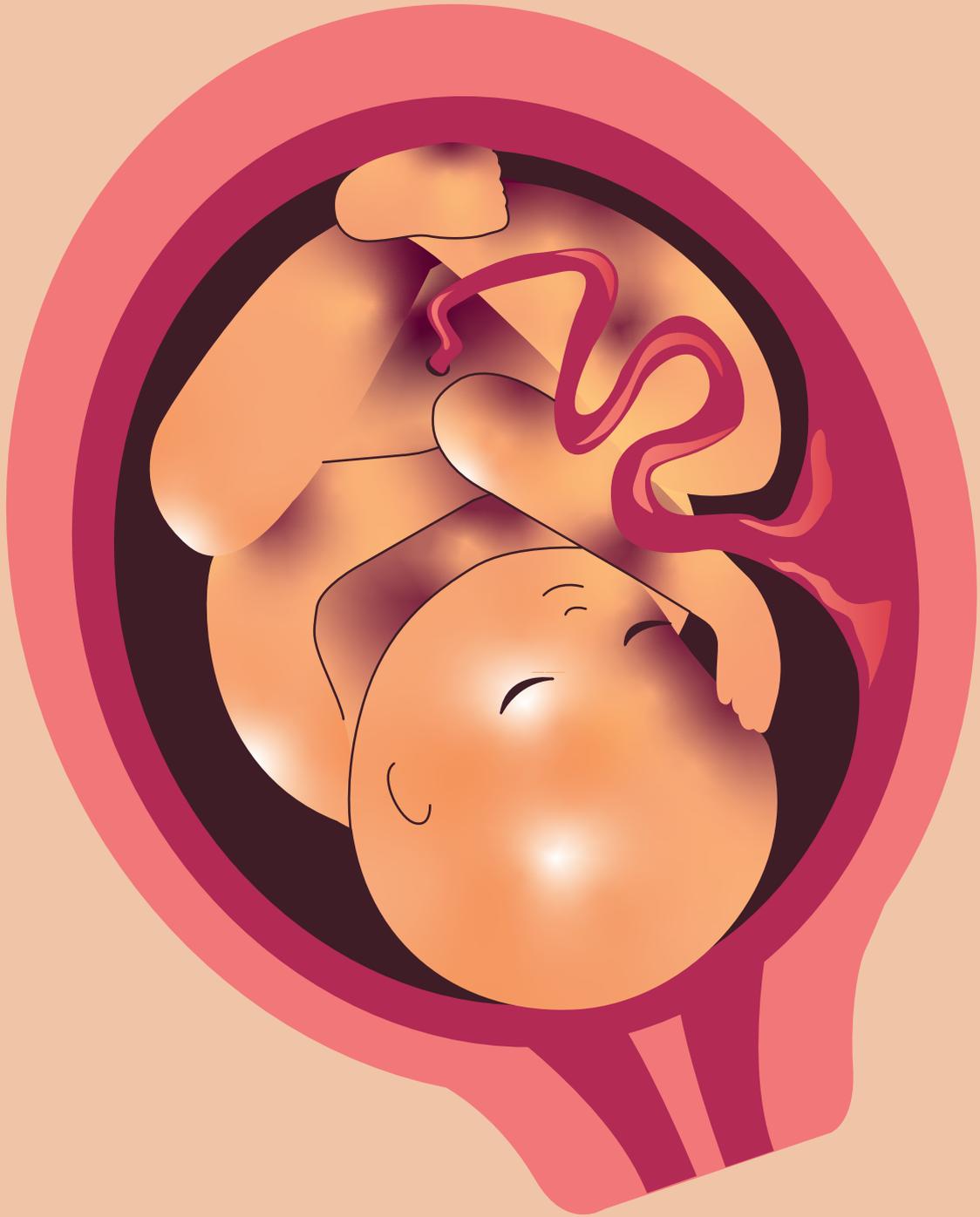












# DAY 1

1

MONTH

2

MONTHS

3

MONTHS

4

MONTHS

# 5 MONTHS

# 6 MONTHS

# 7 MONTHS

8

MONTHS

9

MONTHS

To start with, the baby is a tiny, round fertilised egg, the size of a full stop on a page. These cells multiply and the egg grows and changes. Usually a baby spends nine months in his/her mother's womb before s/he is born. Nine months is the time the baby needs to grow completely and to be strong enough to live outside the womb. The womb is a safe and comfortable place for a baby.

There have been great changes in the baby. During the last month the baby has settled in the womb. The womb has prepared a soft and thick lining to keep the baby safe and comfortable. Though still very tiny, just 2mm, the baby is no longer round like an egg. Instead s/he looks like a little sea horse. The baby's heart starts to beat around the twenty fourth or twenty fifth day.

The baby is now the size of a €2 coin and is growing fast. The baby's arms and legs have started to grow and the baby begins to move about. The baby's mother cannot feel these movements because the baby is so tiny. Now the baby is beginning to look a bit more like a baby.

Even though the baby is only 8cm long, it is now possible to tell whether the baby is a boy or a girl. The baby's eyes are closed. The baby moves both arms and legs, stretching and kicking. By exercising like this, the muscles in the baby's body are helped to grow strong.

The baby is 16cm long and would be small enough to fit into a teacup. Though the baby is still very small, all the important parts have grown. Babies of this age even have fingerprints. All they have to do now is to grow big and strong enough to live outside the womb.

At five months, the baby is 25cm long and could fit into the palm of a grownup's hand. The baby's mother can feel the baby moving by now. Some mothers say it feels like a fish zigzagging inside.

By six months the baby can hear. The noises the baby hears include the sound of his/her mother's heart beating, voices and music. The baby spends some of the time awake and the rest of it asleep. As well as kicking, the baby is grasping with fingers and toes. The baby also practises sucking. Some babies find their thumbs and like to suck them even before they are born.

Every day the baby grows a little more complete. If the baby was born at this stage s/he would need special care. His/her lungs, heart and stomach need to develop more.

The baby has less room to move around. S/he spends some of the time awake and the rest of it asleep. The baby practises breathing. The baby's heart and lungs and stomach develop until they are perfectly formed and ready for use in the world outside the womb.

After nine months the baby is ready to be born. S/he is now strong enough to leave the safety of the womb. S/he will need the love and care of his/her mother and the other members of the family.