

Baby's Almost Here: Advantages of Going Full Term

Becky Nickerson is moving through pregnancy for the first time. As a yoga enthusiast, she's seeing the benefits of the practice, both at home and at her studio, where her students include expectant moms.

"We like to do a little 30-minute consult with them to just show them some ways that they can modify as their body changes."

"We can do more than we think!"

Staying active is a strategic move, building stamina for the mother and providing the baby all the time it needs to develop and grow. That means getting as close as possible to full-term, 40 weeks, from conception to delivery.

"It's best to allow that pregnancy to progress and deliver when the baby is ready. And ideally that will happen after 39 weeks, and so we don't like to intervene unless we medically need to before that time because we know babies still need that time to mature."

Dr. Kathleen Khan is keenly aware of that crucial full-40 mark, in her profession delivering babies and as a new mom herself.

"My daughter was born one day after her due date, and she's absolutely wonderful. She's seven months now, and I'm enjoying every moment of being a mom. It gives me a whole new appreciation what I do for a living and what my patients go through."

Major health organizations now discourage scheduling C-sections or using medication to bring on, or induce, labor simply for comfort, convenience, or other non-medical reasons. Of course, there are valid reasons for inducing labor and performing C-sections, whenever the health of the mother or baby is at risk.

"If the mom has medical problems like high blood pressure, preeclampsia, diabetes, or other medical conditions that are affecting her that make it unsafe to continue the pregnancy. There could be fetal reasons for why we want to deliver early."

Women carrying two babies or more tend to deliver early and sometimes by C-section. But they, too, are encouraged to go as long as possible. If an induction or C-section IS medically necessary, an expectant mom should not be afraid or feel guilty. But she should ask questions of her doctor or other healthcare provider. In most cases, babies do choose their own birthdates. And just a few weeks can make a big difference.

"In the past, we thought that a term pregnancy was any pregnancy, 37 weeks to 42 weeks, but over the last several years, we've realized research has shown us that there's a lot of variations and fetal outcomes, or neonatal outcomes, in those five weeks, and delivery at 37 weeks is oftentimes very different than a baby that's born at 40 weeks."

"Slightly bow your chin towards your chest and take a moment to think of something beautiful."

Becky Nickerson finds added meaning in a yoga teaching called trustful surrender. She shares that with her pregnant students.

"The human body is innately intelligent. Why fight with that? Why try to plan around that? Go with it. Let nature help you along. And if you listen to the natural process, you'll be in a good spot."