

Pregnancy Q&A

How long does pregnancy last?

That question is probably more complicated than most people realize. In theory, pregnancy breaks down into three trimesters, each trimester lasting about 14 weeks. The normal pregnancy is usually 40 weeks total. A baby born before 37 weeks is considered preterm.

What should women expect during the first trimester?

Women should see one of the OB specialists at Capital Women's Care during the initial months of pregnancy, called the first trimester. It's an overwhelming time and an important one for both mother and child.

No first trimester is the same; it varies by patient and even by pregnancy. Some common things patients experience during this time include:

- Tender, swollen breasts
- Lack of menstruation
- Nausea with or without vomiting
- Increased need to go to the bathroom
- Fatigue
- Food cravings
- Food sensitivities
- Heartburn
- Constipation

For some women, the first trimester is an emotional roller coaster, too. A day that starts out with exhilaration can quickly turn to crying and fatigue as the body adjusts to the hormone changes.

Prenatal care during this time includes a discussion of specific issues such as morning sickness and an overall assessment of the mother's health. Specialists such as Drs. Williams and Caskie try to determine the actual gestational age of the baby, too.

What is a high-risk pregnancy?

There are numerous factors that our OB professionals consider when determining if a pregnancy is high-risk.

The age of the mother, for example, is one factor. A woman over the age of 35 might be at risk for problems. Lifestyle is important, too. Things such as smoking or drug use affect the growing baby.

Other considerations include:

- Multiple gestations, such as twins or triplets
- Medical history
- Chronic medical conditions such as diabetes
- Known complications such as low amniotic fluid

It's essential for any patient with a high-risk pregnancy to work with a specialist, such as any of the OB/GYNs at Capital Women's Care.

They have the expertise to educate expectant mothers on the best ways to safeguard their babies and to perform tests such as cervical length measurement and targeted ultrasound to get a clear picture of the potential problems.