

A pregnant woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing a white dress, is shown in profile, smiling and gently holding her belly. The background is a soft-focus green field. The title 'The Empowered Mother' is overlaid in a large, dark blue serif font.

# The Empowered Mother

*A 42-week guide to the  
decisions made through  
pregnancy, birth, and  
baby's first weeks*

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## Week 7

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### Monday

In the 7th week, your baby, technically still an embryo, has doubled in size. Her hands and feet are beginning to stick out from developing arms and legs. Her intestines are almost completely formed and her umbilical cord is providing her with nourishment. Due to a rise in blood volume, you may find yourself visiting the bathroom more often. You may also be experiencing “morning sickness”, although it could strike at any time of the day.

### Tuesday

## Homemade Yogurt

*I love homemade yogurt because you can use high quality milk and get premium yogurt at a low price! In the store, yogurt is generally 4-10x the cost of milk. When you make it yourself, for only 20 minutes or less hands-on time you can have yogurt for nearly the same cost as milk.*

*Yogurt provides many strains of probiotics, which help with digestion and healthy gut flora. The tart treat also is fantastic at settling morning sickness, if this sounds good to you, eat away!*

*Elderberry syrup has fantastic immunity boosting benefits, I make my own, but you can buy it as well. See research, how to make, and where to buy on the [resource page](#).*

½ gallon milk (goat or cow, raw or pasteurized. Preferably raw and from cows or goats eating fresh pasture)  
Plain high quality yogurt for starter  
(I like to buy an organic brand)

In a stock pot, heat milk gently on medium heat, stirring approximately every 10 minutes, until milk is close to a boil.

Cover, remove from burner, and allow to cool until the yogurt is comfortable to the touch, 90-110\* F.

Make sure the yogurt is not too hot at this stage, or you will kill the good bacteria that are going to make your yogurt into milk.

Pour nearly warm milk into jars, I use quart sized jars usually.

Using one tablespoon of commercial yogurt per quart, (or follow the directions that came with your powdered starter) mix yogurt or starter into the jars of warm milk.

Cover, and shake to distribute culture.

Keep warm in a yogurt maker, Excalibur dehydrator, or cooler at 100 degrees for a full 24 hours. Yogurt is now done and should be kept in the refrigerator.

*Wednesday*

## Ultrasound/Doppler, will you use them?

The safety of ultrasounds is questioned a bit, but what many people don't tell you is that Doppler uses the same technology. In fact, a Doppler exposes baby to more of the waves than ultrasound does, since it is a continuous wave and not intermittent like ultrasound.

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*Is the 'quick peek' or listen worth the risks? That's something you need to decide for yourself.*

(see sources for all this on the [resource page](#))

At 7 weeks, this is when you usually can hear or see the baby's heartbeat for the first time! It's exciting and reassuring to parents, as you won't be able to feel baby kick for weeks out yet.

What are ultrasounds used for? Early ultrasounds are useful for dating a pregnancy and determining an accurate due date if the mother did not know her cycles (or if the doctor does not trust that the mother knows her cycles, which is another issue altogether). An anatomy scan at 18-20 weeks can determine whether there are markers for the baby to have genetic or developmental defects, and the sex can also be seen. Growth can be tracked, though this is less reliable than many will admit. The heart rate can be seen/heard

earlier with ultrasound and Doppler than it can be heard with a fetoscope.

What might the risks be? Ultrasound technology uses sound waves to see/hear the baby through the mother's abdominal tissue. When shooting waves at the baby, there is risk that the baby heats up, which may cause brain cell mutations, brain cells to stop growing as they do naturally, blood in the lung tissue and brain tissue, and more links may be present (*see [resource page](#)*).

**Risks to benefits:** Despite all the information medical professionals can get from Doppler and ultrasound technology, use of them statistically does not improve birth outcome. For individual families, they may have other emotional reasons (which cannot be measured in a statistic) that they want to take a look at the baby. For example, some families who have experienced a loss, desire more reassurance that everything is on track than other families with histories of a healthy pregnancy. A family who is planning on moving or another life changing event during the pregnancy may have an ultrasound to rule out it being a higher risk pregnancy. A family concerned about birth defects may want all the information available to them, even if there is a risk of false negatives and false positives (parents being told their baby is normal when it's not, or told that it has a birth defect when it does not).

### **Some questions to ask yourself:**

- How much risk am I comfortable taking with technology that is not proven?
- How many ultrasound exposures (Doppler or ultrasound) am I comfortable exposing my baby to in a normally developing pregnancy?
- How much experience does my practitioner have in spotting things that may be problems without using ultrasound technology?
- Is it really important that I know the sex?

- In the event that the pregnancy is not progressing normally, or I have complications such as severe bleeding, would I be comfortable getting an ultrasound then?
- How will I handle pressure from friends and family if I choose not to use an ultrasound to find out the sex of my baby?

*Thursday*

## Sunscreen

This week we're going to look up sunscreen for not only you, but also to decide if you're comfortable using sunscreen on your baby the summer after he's born.

Sunscreen, like everything else, gets absorbed into the bloodstream by the skin.

There are nontoxic alternatives for sun protection, and more and more people are choosing to go sunscreen free if they don't burn.

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*Chemicals (oxybenzone, octinoxate, homosalate, and more – see [resource page](#)) found in common sunscreen have been linked with cancer, hormone disruption, and skin irritation.*

There is thought that if we are consuming stable fats rather than rancid or hydrogenated fats, we will be less likely to burn- it protects our skin from the inside out (see [resource page](#))

I kept lightweight 'sunshirts' in my car and dressed my babies and toddlers in those, with wide brimmed hat. Once they were 3, my daughter didn't burn so I didn't worry about it, my son still burns, so he wears a baseball hat almost all the time when we're outside during the sunny months, I also use a zinc oxide based sunscreen on his ears and tops of his hands when we're out for a long time. He wears a long sleeve SPF swim shirt, in fact, both my kids wear swim shirts since my daughter prefers swimming in that to a bathing suit.

*Friday*

## **Journal Ideas**

Where has baby been so far? Where else will baby go while she's still in your belly?

*Find references, more information, and other helpful links on the [Chapter 7](#) section of the resource page.*

## Week 8

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### *Monday*

During the 8th week, your baby has fully formed eyelids, webbed hands and feet and is constantly wiggling and shifting around inside of you. While you won't feel movement for several more weeks, baby is moving around quite a bit. Rapidly rising hormone levels may be manifesting themselves in the form of a tight bra. Don't be alarmed! Your breasts will continue to grow and shift during your pregnancy as they prepare to nourish your infant.

### *Tuesday*

## **Ginger Broccoli Beef Stir Fry**

Choose grassfed beef to fill up on balanced healthy fats that your baby needs. Ginger can calm queasy stomachs. See the resource page for more information on why grassfed beef is so much better than corn-fed, including the lower risk of food poisoning!

### **Marinade for the Beef**

- 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 5 Tbsp fish sauce (or 1 teaspoon sea salt + 1/4 cup stock)
- 1 Tbsp honey
- 1 Tbsp peeled, grated fresh ginger
- 1 teaspoon chili pepper flakes
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin

### **Stir Fry**

- 1 1/2 lb top sirloin steak
- 2 Tbsp coconut oil
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil (optional)
- 3-4 green onions, sliced 1/2-inch apart, including the greens
- 1 head broccoli, cut into small florets
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2-3 hot chiles, such as red serranos, seeded, sliced
- 1-inch nob of ginger, peeled, cut lengthwise into thin strips
- 1/2 cup loosely packed cilantro, chopped



Chill beef in the freezer for 30 minutes before slicing, this will make it easier to slice. Cut into thin strips, 1/2 inch by 2 inches approx. Place in a bowl and toss with marinade ingredients. Allow to marinade all day.

Stir fry: In a skillet over medium-high heat heat oils until very hot. As the oil heats, pour marinade from beef. Saute beef in 3-4 small batches until browned on the outside but rare on the inside, approx 1 minute. Transfer to a bowl and stir fry the rest of the ingredients, cooking until vegetables are cooked to desired doneness, just a few minutes. Serve over rice, pouring juices remaining in the bottom of the pan on top.

*Wednesday*

## **Dating the Baby**

No, this isn't about taking your unborn baby to dinner and a movie, it's about the common practice of determining the baby's gestational age through measuring- either by an ultrasound, by hcg level, or by fundal height. This is a normal part of most pregnancies – we all want to have a general idea of when our little bundle of joy will arrive. But it can also be a source of interventions that you might want to avoid, so today we'll look at some potential issues around it.

Some women are completely unaware of when they conceive, such as those with PCOS and very irregular cycles that they were not charting, or moms who were nursing, and because of that also had very irregular cycles.

Most women who remember when their last menstrual period was and have fairly consistent cycles will have an accurate-enough due date.

Be cautious if you are sure of your dates and your care provider wants to change your due date based on measuring off an ultrasound. Right now while you're in early pregnancy the due date really doesn't matter much at all, but once you're nearing the end there is pressure to induce and start the cycle of interventions.

In addition, do not allow ‘the need to confirm dates’ if you are sure of your dates pressure you into allowing an early ultrasound if you want to avoid ultrasounds altogether, or just do one in the middle of pregnancy.

*Thursday*

## **Artificial Sweeteners**

Artificial sweeteners are in many of the foods that advertise themselves as being healthy alternatives. Yes, they greatly reduce the amount of sugar or corn syrup in a product, which is good, but they come with their own set of controversy.

Under the brand names Nutra Sweet, Splenda, or the generic names aspartame, saccharin, and ribaudioside-a, a very small amount of artificial sweetener is used to sweeten quite a bit of food. They are found in most gums, diet beverages, flavored ‘waters’ bottled at the supermarket, sugar free/no calorie ‘juice’ flavorings, and even some toothpaste.

These sweeteners are approved by the FDA, but they are made in a chemical plant, are they something we want to be putting in our bodies? See links on my resources page for more information, many women choose to forgo all artificial sweeteners during pregnancy.

One low calorie sweetener that is natural is stevia, it’s a very sweet herb that is actually from the stevia plant. It’s sold in packets under the name Truvia, the packets are processed, yes, but they are derived from a real plant. You can find stevia sweetened soda at health food stores, if that’s your desire.

- What will you do about artificial sweeteners during pregnancy?
- What foods are you eating that contain them?
- What natural alternatives would be easy switches?

As always, find related links on the [resource page](#).

*Friday*

## **Journal Entry**

Has your body started to change yet? Are you excited about the future changes?

*Find references, more information, and other helpful links on the [Chapter 8](#) section of the resource page.*