



# **Baby in Mind - A Reflective Pregnancy Diary as a Health Promotion Intervention in Early Parenthood**

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# Week-by-week pregnancy diary

information about fetal development and pregnancy

practical tips to enhance well-being

questions to inspire reflection about fetus and parenthood

## Week 25



The 23rd week of the fetus's life  
Foot length: 42 mm

### The baby:

The baby's skin turns rosy pink as the small blood vessels below the skin (the capillaries) are formed. Even the blood vessels in the lungs are developing. The skin is wrinkly, because the connective tissue under the skin isn't there yet. The mouth and lips are very sensitive to touch. When the hand nears the mouth, the fetus automatically begins sucking on the thumb or other fingers. The grip is even stronger than a newborn's! From now on, the fetus could survive outside the womb (though he or she would need some assistance).

### The mother:

Your skin often itches as it stretches over the belly. You can relieve the itching with simple moisturizers, skin lotions, or oils. It can be relaxing to massage the belly, and the baby is able to feel caresses to your belly. If the muscles of the pelvic floor are in good condition, you will recover sooner after childbirth. This also prevents the uterus and bladder from experiencing prolapse (bulging).

### Tips to remember:

It's good to exercise the pelvic floor muscles regularly. You can feel these muscles contract when, for example, you suck on your finger. With trained pelvic floor muscles, sexual pleasure may also be greater. Sex does not harm the baby, but you may need to be creative in finding suitable positions.



Take a moment to pay attention to your baby. How do you think your child feels in the womb right now?

How did you feel when you saw the baby in the ultrasound scan? How did it feel to look at the picture?

*Don't just do something. Stand there and pay attention. Your child is trying to tell you something.*

*Sally Provence*



# Multiprofessional working group

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**Matti Klockars**, MD, Professor Emeritus of General Practice



To strenghten  
the parent's:

## Aim

- curiosity towards the baby as a small person under development
- ability to keep the baby and his/her needs in mind
- interest to care for the baby by taking care of own health and well-being
- opportunities to reflect on feelings and thoughts about becoming a parent
- experiences of shared joy



# Applied theory

- to think and reflect about feelings and experiences, within self and others and giving value to this reflective stance
- a parent's capacity to think of the fetus, as a separate individual, with developing personal features and needs, and courage to reflect upon expectations and feelings related to becoming a parent for this child. *(Pajulo et al 2016)*





# Parental mentalization is associated with:

- stronger parental-fetal attachment
- healthier lifestyle and behavior
- more positive attitude towards parenting
- better emotion regulation and more sensitive interaction with the child
- more secure child attachment
- healthier child development

(Schechter et al., 2005; Slade et al, 2005; Sharp & Fonagy, 2008; Fonagy et al 2012)

Accurately  
for



# Implementation

- elements to inspire curiosity towards baby
- quotes to bring a larger human perspective
- visualization of fetal growth
- space for messages to the baby and to insert pictures.
- simple layout leaves space for own representations to become activated
- gender-neutral and calm green color

From self- to  
baby  
perspective

# Gradually deepening

Do you remember how you felt when you took the pregnancy test and the result was positive?

Which of your mother's characteristics would you like to see in yourself as a parent?

Have you noticed particular situations during which you think about your baby?

Have you noticed that your mood or something you are doing affects the baby in the womb? What have you noticed?





From a targeted prevention to a general health promotion intervention

# Background and development

- Originally designed (2011) for substance-abusing mothers in a hospital setting  
→ to stay abstinent from substance use and to help connect emotionally with the fetus
- A family version (2014) → Shared parenting and increased understanding of each other. Can be used individually or together with someone
- Open access to digital version (2016), promoted to all expecting families in Finland



Feedback  
collected from:

## Tested 2014-2016

- mothers at residential mother and baby units and Mother and Child Homes
- depressed mothers (selected from FinnBrain cohort study)
- families visiting the Maternity clinic in three municipalities
- families getting support from a volunteer doula
- nurses at Maternity clinics and staff at Mother and Child Homes



Positive outcomes:  
something for  
everybody

# Feedback - Parents in the primary health care settings (n=187)

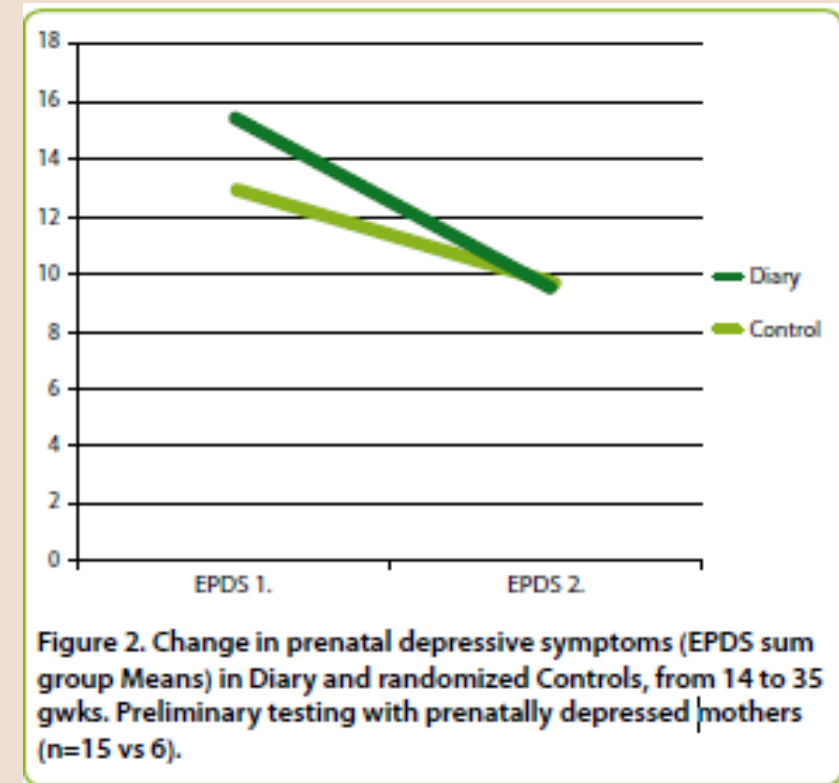
- The majority (96%) found that the diary worked without the need for supervision from caregivers. 69% used the diary alone.
- 73% scored the diary between 8 and 10 (on the scale 0-10). All elements equally interesting
- Experienced impact: %

“Diary enhanced relationship between me and the fetus-baby”	59 %
“Diary enhanced relationship between my spouse and the baby”	25%
“Diary enhanced relationship between me and my spouse”	25%
Reported negative effects	0%

Depressive  
symptoms declined

# Feedback- Prenatally depressed mothers (n=15 vs 6)

- Small RCT-trial
- diary group mothers tended to gain stronger attachment with the fetus
- 90% rated the diary as excellent or good
- 60% rated the reflective questions and tasks as most important.



A helpful tool to:

## Feedback - Professionals and volunteers

- initiate discussions with families, reflect together
- direct parents' thoughts into parenting experience
- increase own knowledge of fetal development
- remind what is "normal"
- strengthen the parent-child and the family-caretaker relationships



Download  
or print:

# Where to get the Baby in Mind-diary

- På svenska  
[www.folkhalsan.fi/graviditetsdagbok](http://www.folkhalsan.fi/graviditetsdagbok)
- Suomeksi  
[www.folkhalsan.fi/raskauspaivakirja](http://www.folkhalsan.fi/raskauspaivakirja)
- In English  
[www.folkhalsan.fi/pregnancydiary](http://www.folkhalsan.fi/pregnancydiary)

# Thank you!

We are constantly working to develop the diary further and would like to share experiences and receive comments and feedback

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Acknowledgment:

