At about 10 to 12 weeks, the fetal heart rate may be auscultated.

Current Pregnancy Status

Table 13 describes the key elements of an assessment of current pregnancy status. Current pregnancy history includes information to accurately date the pregnancy, such as last menstrual period, length of menstrual cycle, method and use of family planning (if any), date of the woman’s knowledge of pregnancy, and exposure to medications, toxic substances, and dangerous environmental conditions.

Table 13. Assessment of Current Pregnancy Status

- Current pregnancy history, including psychological factors, nutritional status, and any available laboratory data
- Review of symptoms that may suggest medical or pregnancy complications
- Complete physical examination
- Support systems
- Barriers to prenatal care

The review of potential signs and symptoms includes information about nausea and vomiting, headaches, abdominal pain, visual changes, fever, viral illness, vaginal bleeding, dysuria, back pain, cramping, and other potential issues in pregnancy.

Because pregnancy affects the entire family, assessment must be family-centered. Psychological factors to assess include the woman’s and her partner’s acceptance of the pregnancy; support systems such as her family, the partner’s family, and friends; and psychological, financial, and/or social barriers to prenatal care.

Initial Physical Examination

The initial physical examination is complete and covers each body system. The review of systems can usually be performed as the physical examination is conducted. Because physical characteristics can influence the pregnancy course and birth, particular attention is given to the anthropometric assessment, including height, weight and pelvimetry data (Witter, Caulfield & Stoltzfus, 1995). The pelvic examination includes assessment of uterine size and cervical length, a Pap smear if there is no recent smear available, and assessment for vaginitis and cervicitis. At approximately 10 to 12 weeks or later, the fetal heart rate may be auscultated.