



The Pregnant Chic

Congratulations! Pregnancy is a wonderful amazing experience and probably the fastest steepest learning curve you'll ever find yourself on. You'll start out fresh and excited and keen to get as much advice as possible.

Within days of your body starting to show, you'll be sick of all the advice that people give you. Everyone; parents, parents-in-law, friends, colleagues, people at bus stops, people in queues are all waiting to tell you how to take care of yourself in pregnancy and how to raise your child.

Your body will become public property – people will touch your belly, bum and boobs (no kidding). I'm not talking medical people, I'm talking friends and family and sometimes strangers too. You'll need to be prepared for this to happen and to have a strategy for dealing with it. The first few times it happened to me, I was left standing there frozen like a stunned mullet. My worst experience was a client bending down and having a full blown conversation with my belly talking in baby language. I didn't know where to look!

You'll experience a running commentary everywhere you go. People (again not the medically qualified type of person – the stranger in the Baker's queue type of person) will tell you that you are too big and must be expecting twins, and too small, all on the same day. They'll tell you whether you are having a girl or a boy – and they will be very insistent on their ability to predict baby gender.

The saddest part of all is that women all over the place will flock to tell you their labour horror stories. My theory on this is that some women have experienced very traumatic births and meeting pregnant women brings these fears up. It's like they feel compelled to discuss their labours with you. Maybe they feel that they are preparing you by sharing their horror stories? What you should know is that birthing has evolved and that birthing is becoming a better and more beautiful experience all the time, with more and more birthing centres moving away from the lay on the bed in stirrups model. There are some wonderful birthing options – we recommend "Calm Birthing" which uses relaxation and positive suggestion to create a natural pain managed delivery.

You'll need to make changes to your diet. Stay away from the deli counter. Avoid cold cuts of meat, cold seafood, soft unpasturised cheeses, liver, ready-prepared salads and raw foods like eggs, sushi, etc. Now would be a good time to stop drinking and smoking. You must focus on drinking lots of water and eating nutritious foods (no matter how



much you get steered away by nausea or cravings). If you suffer nausea, try lots of small snacks rather than trying to eat entire meals.

You may need to alter your exercise routine. There are dedicated fitness classes such as water aerobics, pilates and yoga all for expectant mothers. Ensure you let your fitness instructor know about your pregnancy and make modifications to your routine to accommodate the baby growing inside of you. You'll soon be introduced to a fun new exercise called the pelvic floor. Once you master this art you'll never be stuck for a pair of nut crackers again.

Most women rush out and buy books and try to find out everything they can about pregnancy. There is plenty of time to learn and you'll soon become an expert. Learn what you need to learn for each trimester and then savour your pregnancy time rather than worrying it away. Learn how to politely tell those who try to overload you with advice to "shut up".

In the first pregnancy you will discover that the intimate time that you had with your partner is torn apart – you will have to fight to protect your private time. If you want lots of help when the baby is born and you want every member of your immediate family moving in with you for a couple of months, you will not be disappointed. Again this is something you might want to consider managing very early on. It is ok for you and your partner to want to do this baby thing by yourself. Do not be coerced into having visitors that you don't want. Only you will know whether your 'helpers' are helping or are in fact just one more person for you to manage.

There may be some immediate preparations that you need to make. Obstetricians and birthing wards get booked very quickly. You will need to see an obstetrician around the 8th week and in some states you should have your hospital booked a couple of weeks before the first appointment. Depending on your local area you may also need to book your childcare before the baby is born! Phone around your local services to find out about waiting lists.

The fun part is reading the baby books and following the progress of the baby's development in the womb. It's exciting to know that you are growing fingernails or ears or that the baby has grown 1cm this week. Take regular photos of your tummy at regular frequencies to measure your progress. You really don't notice it yourself – by the time you are 37 weeks you feel like you have always had a basketball in the middle of your stomach and it's great to look back and realise that the basketball progressed from a small orange. Some women like to take the photos in the same position in the same clothes. I say – if you get through your pregnancy without upsizing your wardrobe at least twice, you've been blessed.



There is an extensive range of maternity clothing. You do not need to spend 9 months slopping around in a tracksuit. However, all maternity clothing has one thing in common which is the extra \$100 on the price tag for carrying the word 'maternity'. For example a swimming costume 2 sizes bigger than you normally wear will cost you \$80. A maternity swimming costume in your regular size will cost you \$180. They will both look the same on; unflattering and stretched beyond the capability of lycra.

Weird bits will grow on your body. Your belly button will pop outwards (if you were lucky enough to start with an 'innie'), your thighs may gather cellulite, you could get stretch marks on your belly, bum and/or boobs, you could develop skin tags, varicose or spider veins, puffy hands and feet, etc. Consider a moisturiser, preferably one made for preventing stretch marks and rub all over your belly, bum and boobs every night before bed. If you are in any doubt, check out any ailment with your doctor.

Your hormones are more random generating than the machine they use to draw the lottery numbers. The funniest things can make you cry your eyes out. My partner recently completed a 15km charity run and I spent the entire 2 hours sobbing because I was so proud of him. I've also cried because he wouldn't ask the butcher how best to cook the lamb roast. Thankfully for most of us the emotional melt downs seem to be fleeting moments that can be cured with chocolate and/or jelly babies.

The final change to bring to your attention is the change in your friends. A notorious time for old childfree, childless friends to make rapid exits and for people with kids or people who are expecting to enter. Don't expect those exiting to make long speeches about how things have changed, or to want to have one last night out for old times sake. The minute your pink line appeared in your pregnancy kit, they deleted your number from their mobile. You won't be seeing them again anytime soon (not at least until they find themselves knocked up too).

Pregnancy is a very special and wonderful time. Best not to have any expectations – just live it and love it. Read up on each trimester as you enter it. Don't wish the time away – it is a precious beautiful time. Record as much of it as you can – it passes in a blur.

Listen to your body – we used to be able to carry and to birth instinctively in the days before OB's realised that they could charge us \$200 a visit. Do whatever you feel you need to do. But don't eat soap, chalk, coal or dirt – if you fancy any of these your body is telling you that you need an essential mineral or vitamin. Better to buy supplements from the health store than to freak everyone out.



Manage the comments, the touching, the in-laws – you'll be a bigger and stronger person for it. Or instead you can just break down and cry and let your partner manage it for you? And whatever you do, utilise your pregnancy. Call any food you fancy a 'craving' – and make your partner go out and buy it at 3am. We all need to stick together on this one.

Congratulations once again – there's 50% chance that your little one will be a born woman too!

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