

Pregnancy 2021: What parents need to know | The Angliss, Box Hill Hospital

Soon-to-be parents can find navigating the world of pregnancy and birth confusing. Here's a midwife's advice to tackling the hard questions.

Laura Armitage

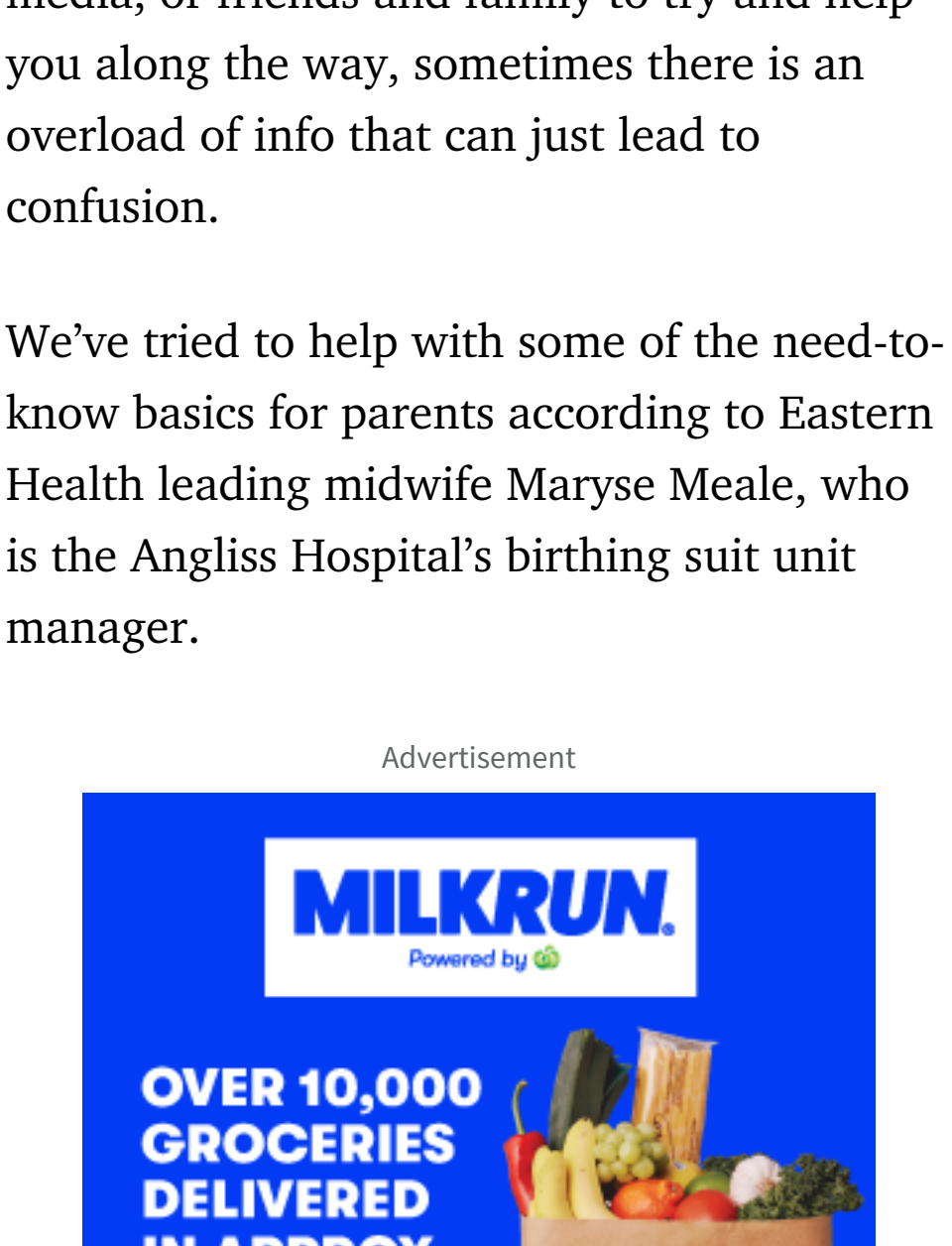
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Make sure you do your research is the key, says midwife Maryse Mead.

It's your first pregnancy and after your initial excitement and burst of euphoria, you realise you have no idea what you're doing, what to expect or where to start.

Every pregnant mumma is different and while there are plenty of groups on social media, or friends and family to try and help you along the way, sometimes there is an overload of info that can just lead to confusion.

We've tried to help with some of the need-to-know basics for parents according to Eastern Health leading midwife Maryse Meale, who is the Angliss Hospital's birthing suit unit manager.

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Let us know in the comments if we've missed anything.

Is there any way to prepare for first time parenthood?

There are many ways to prepare for first time parenthood. I think it is important parents prepare as much as they can.

Preparation for labour is the first step for that.

Education around birth and ways to manage the normal physiological pain of labour is a very important step towards managing parenthood.

There is a lot of education available, mostly online at the moment, due to Covid.

I would encourage people who are pregnant for the first time to do their research and get as much information as they can prior to going in to labour.

Suggestions on where to look to find information about labour?

I would suggest looking online for local providers. Investigate, and avoid any US-based information.

Ensure any source of information is local to Australia, or even better — Melbourne. There is a lot of information available online these days, written info and video info.

When a first-time mum asks, what do I need to know? What are your top five responses?

1. Be informed
2. The pain of labour is physiological and expected. It doesn't mean there is something wrong. It is an important part of labour and makes the pregnant person move in ways that help the baby to be born.
3. Trust your body and trust your instincts
4. When thinking about parenting, same thing – trust your instincts
5. Try to filter the advice you will no doubt be given from all sorts of people and just use the bits that suit you and your family

How many midwife appointments should you expect to attend?

In a straightforward pregnancy, the usual number of ante natal visits is about 10 if the pregnancy continues beyond 41 weeks.

This will usually be some sort of combination of seeing both midwives and doctors depending on the requirements of each specific pregnancy. Some pregnant people require more frequent visits.

What is a usual number of scans (if all going well) and at what weeks you can expect?

Most pregnant people will have a scan early in the pregnancy for dating or early screening purposes (before 12 weeks).

We also recommend a scan at around 20 weeks for a check on the wellbeing of the baby and to note where the placenta has developed.

Any other scans will be according to medical need, but not routine.

What is your advice around birth plans?

We encourage pregnant people to think about their plans for labour/birth and be as prepared as possible.

Writing a plan helps the pregnant person and their partner become informed and make decisions about their care.

Our pregnant people are encouraged to fill in our birth preferences page in their handheld record.

This includes:

- Who is there planned support for labour/birth?
- Any notes regarding previous birth experience and what is important to them
- Any preferences regarding pain management, music, surroundings, etc
- Any cultural or religious needs
- Any preferences for after the birth

How would you advise mums who don't want pain relief?

I actually find this a strange question. I would support and encourage that. I think all pregnant people should educate themselves about the pain of labour and its purpose.

They should also educate themselves about ways to manage that pain as labour progresses.

We obviously have medical treatments to help with pain management, which sometimes become necessary.

Where can parents learn about pain relief for their birth plan?

Online education is available for labour/birth/parenting which includes discussion around managing the normal physiological pain aspect of labour.

Non-pharmacological methods include (but are not limited to):

- Being informed about the normal pain expectations for labour and the progressions of labour
- Good support
- Remaining active
- Position changes
- Water immersion
- Aromatherapy
- Calmbirth/hypnobirth techniques
- Music

What do you say to first time mums who are convinced they must have a vaginal birth?

Birth has been happening since the beginning of time. We are lucky to be living in a time where we have amazing medical treatments, which mean we can intervene, when necessary, for the benefit of both parent and child.

However, most babies are born vaginally and all parents are concerned for, and will do anything to keep their baby safe.

How do you convince first time parents to think beyond the birth and look towards the planning around returning home?

I agree, it is sometime difficult for first time parents to see beyond the labour and birth. However, I think these days most people are keen to learn as much as possible.

I think the main thing to get across is that life will be very different after the birth of their child. It is exhausting and all consuming, but also so rewarding.

The reality of parenting is something that really needs to be experienced to fully appreciate it.

Is there a way to diminish the risk of postnatal depression by communicating with first time mums ahead of baby's birth?

I think education and information is the key.

If people are aware of the different possible outcomes and able to learn ways to manage labour and birth, no matter what the outcome is, the risk of feeling traumatised by the birth is less.

I think pregnant women should not feel ashamed about asking for emotional help during their pregnancy or during their time as parents.

There is a lot of support out in the communities and in the hospital.

First time parents are often bombarded with advice from well-meaning friends, family, the local shop owner. What do you say to those feeling overwhelmed?

As I mentioned above, my advice with this is to listen to all the advice and then filter it. Use only what suits them and their family.

What do you say to first time mums who are convinced they will be able to breastfeed and feel that if they can't, they have failed their baby?

There is a lot of support to help those who need it. We also offer support to parents who choose, or are unable to breastfeed.

What about body 'bouncing' back. the reality can be very different. what's your advice?

Parents today are continuously faced with images of celebrities or even "friends" on Facebook and Instagram, who post photos of the "perfect family", which makes it very difficult.

My advice is to check out the parents in the supermarket who have a young baby or child with them – that is the reality.

Bodies do not "bounce back" and should not be expected to.

Growing a baby for nine to 10 months and then giving birth to that baby is going to leave its mark, and that is not a bad thing.

What should parents consider following the birth of their baby?

Parents will definitely need to have a car seat ready for their trip home after discharge from hospital.

I think meal preparation is also a really good thing. To have some meals pre-cooked and frozen to be used for the first couple of weeks at least is very helpful.

Plan to not do much in the first couple of weeks at least. The plan should be to stay home, focus on themselves and their baby.

Limit visitors to their home, at least in the first few days.

Say yes to any offers of help in the first few weeks: help with washing, shopping, cleaning etc.

If you think we've missed anything, let us know below.

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