

Baby-Having Realness: 15 truths to prepare you for what's in store
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There are a million books and blogs out there that aim to prepare you for becoming a mom. You can read them and ask questions and sign up for infant CPR and try prepare yourself for EVERY. THING.

But there will still come a time when you're covered in fluids (yours, baby's, and unidentified) wondering where the hell this chapter was in *What to Expect*.

Because I'm a TMI-prone over-sharer, I'm here to help. Here's *my* (totally not medically based or at all comprehensive) list of stuff I wish I would've known during those nipple-blisteringly blissful first days.

1. There are tons of bizarre anatomical things and they all mean something.

And if you don't go to the classes then you'll never know WTF a mucus plug or colostrum or meconium is, or what to look for in your amniotic fluid, or what it means to be 100% effaced or anterior or posterior, or why placentas are amazing AF, or the proper way to football hold...or a million other bits of wisdom the genius angel nurses have to teach you. Sign up and go to all the classes on all the things. They're usually free at the hospital—and it's great prep for squeamish dudes too.

2. At some point after you deliver, you'll be expected to go to the bathroom.

No part of this will be your normal, scroll through Insta, wipe-and-go BM. The thought of (and attempts at) pooping will be terrifying and excruciating. Drink all the little juices and take all the softeners and bring all the Tucks pads.

And for urinating, have a full squirt bottle of very warm water ready (no TP allowed). All your parts will eventually function normally again (fingers crossed) but it will suuuuck at first.

This also definitely applies to the first time you try to have sex post-episiotomy. I was convinced I was stitched up all the way closed and blocked off forever, like one of those old timey mines in the backwoods.

3. Write it *all* down.

The Apgar score, the weight and length, blood type, time of birth. Do a quick sketch of your placenta (just kidding).

Write down names of visitors and favorite nurses or what movie you watched while waiting to fully dilate.

Write down who changed the weird, tarry meconium diaper.

You will forget these little details in the craziness of trying to find your footing (and the wipes and pacifier).

Take a whole lotta pictures too. For years.

Words from a wise mom friend: "I wish I'd been disciplined enough to take photos and videos in a more intentional way, capturing a little bit of baby life every day. They change so fast in that first year, and unfortunately, we didn't document it as well as we might have."

This is some serious #truth. All the sweet things you're *sure* will be stored in your mama heart forever and ever might actually not be. My girls are eight and 10 and I still pause sometimes when filling out forms that ask for their birth year. And I honestly couldn't tell you my second daughter's first word. Fingers crossed it'll pop up on a random flip phone video somewhere in storage. (Second kids, am I right?)

4. I truly know women who won't fart in front of their husbands—like real-life women who aren't even on BRAVO.

LOL. My husband *wishes*.

Here's the truth: If your man is involved in the birthing process and the torturous healing process that follows, there is jack crap that will be secretive or sacred anymore.

We reached a new level of intimacy when I called him in to look at the shower floor and help me decipher if that grody glob was my mucus plug. And I've never loved my husband more than when he yelled through the drive-up speaker at Walgreens, "Does the hemorrhoid medicine go *on* or *in* the anus?" Dude had no shame making a late-night run for nipple cream, pads (with WINGS!), Preparation H, and gummy bears.

Postpartum is not the time to try to preserve your womanly mystique. Take his help. Let him have a job in all this; let him feel needed and helpful. You'll need an extra hand reaching/wiping/squirting all those parts anyway.

And he *will* see you as sexy again—probably sexier, considering how you made him a parent and all that. If you're worried about it, you could always cut your disposable undies into a little mesh G-string.

5. And now some labor and delivery truths.

- There is no part of labor and childbirth that is like the movies. Chances are very, very slim your water will break in little gush all over your cute A-line dress on a NY sidewalk. Chances are slim your water will even break on its own without help from the giant crochet hook thing.

- And labor/delivery is looong—depending on a jillion factors, it likely takes way more than the two TV pushes.
- The epidural is stuck to your back with tape and it hurts way worse than a lip waxing when they rip it off.
- You really won't care (and likely won't even know) if you poop—there are far weirder and grosser things coming out of you, and the nurses are damn masters of making it all disappear.
- You will develop a much greater appreciation for your own mom.
- There's going to be swelling. Yes, down there. Whatever you do, don't look. Just use the ice pack.
- There are bizarre side effects sometimes, like puking or sweating or shaking uncontrollably or being super hungry and thirsty.
- The first few days your baby latches, the nipple stimulation causes your uterus to contract (a good thing), which is painful and terrible and feels like labor all over again.
- Your areolas are now painful pepperonis.
- Plus a million other crazy and painful and bizarre things, but OMG THE MIRACLE OF LIFE!!!

6. You truly don't need ALL the THINGS.

Look, we all know how fun it is to use the little scanner at Target and make a registry. And baby stuff is just tiny and cute and fuzzy.

But as any experienced mom will tell you, you won't use half of it.

- The baby socks will definitely get lost, and they never stay on anyway.
- A plastic fan or your dryer is a white noise machine.
- Plain white, old-school cloth diapers are the best burp rags. Buy a ton of them.
- Any bag is a diaper bag when there are diapers in it.
- You WILL need a nightlight for 3am changes, really great nursing bras, a few cotton swaddle blankets, and a sturdy, funky-smell-containing diaper bin.

7. We don't all look in our newborns' eyes while they lovingly lay on our chest and fall immediately in love.

Some babies are whisked away quickly, and some mamas are just trying to catch their breath after a long, exhausting labor. Not to mention there's still placenta delivery and likely some stitching happening.

In the interest of full disclosure, the first time I looked at my baby, all I felt was pain (duh), confusion, and disbelief. I had a kid?

It was a few months before I felt totally bonded with her. I kept expecting someone to ring the doorbell and take her back, informing me that they'd made a horrible mistake when they gave this precious infant to someone who lived on pizza rolls and Judge Judy (AKA: me).

It took some time to feel like a mom. Like she really was my daughter.

And even longer to feel like I was me again.

8. You'll freak out the first time you see the nurses tossing your baby around, but newborns are far more resilient than you think.

I was convinced I was going to break a teeny arm trying to get it in a onesie. Definitely support the head and all that, but know that, while they're somewhat fragile, you *can* bend them. They're pretty pliable—like slime without the glitter glue mess.

9. Anyone who can decipher and decode each cry is a damn witch doctor.

Don't feel bad if you have no idea what your baby needs.

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It all sounded like wailing to me and I just wanted to make her happy and make it stop. Each cry made me anxious—*Is she dying? Can she breathe? Is it my breath? Does she hate our faces?*—and made my boobs leak. (Sidenote: Invest in nursing pads.)

I wish I had some type of tear translator app—or her sobs came with subtitles—but alas, we were left to feed and burp and shush and sway and change. (And repeat.)

We tried everything and tried to trust our instincts. And when all else failed, we swaddled like no other. My babies were Chipotle burritos (guac is extra!) for the first few months of life, and I am not mad about it.

Now I'm craving Corona and salsa.

10. Plan all you want and have it all typed out, and definitely do some research, but when it all goes down (or comes down, as in the birth canal) things can change fast.

I know more than one mom who dilated too fast or got to the hospital too late for an epidural. Babies get stuck or turn breech or get all stressed out.

Try hard to be flexible and know that, much like they'll later do to your home, babies will totally crap all over your plans.

11. You can wear all the bellybands and Kim-endorsed corsets you can buy, but your body just never quite goes back to what it was.

It's forever squishier. And leakier. (Note to self: Do Kegels.) Everything is shaped differently now (and whoa, the boobs). But even if you don't feel trim and toned (LOL, like I even was before kids), you'll still feel like a

total champ for everything your badass body just went through and created and (somehow) endured.

12. Everything is a phase and whatever hellacious crap you're enduring truly won't last forever.

The pregnancy constipation and heartburn. The belly that still looks second trimester, even though your baby can hold his own bottle. The “witching hour.”

Everything just takes time.

The cradle cap and baby acne will go away and you *will* have a beautiful baby that doesn't look like Dobby the house elf. You'll have sex again. You'll stop crying eventually.

None of it lasts forever—but that goes for the cuteness and sweetness and teeniness too, so soak it all in.

Except the anxiety and worry and fear you're effing it all up. Yeah, sorry—that part *never* ends.

13. Set the bar low.

Worry not about the togetherness of your sh*t.

You'll have to let some things go during those first few months in order to survive. No one cares if the baby is the only one bathed and looking cute. You don't need to put on mascara for casserole-bringers. The bottles and pump parts can pile up in the sink. And don't even think about shaving your legs.

I'm not sure I put on anything but pajama pants for at least six weeks—my bar was ground-level low. As long as baby's fed (formula counts!),

you're fed (Quarter Pounders count!) and (sorta) sleeping, you're winning.

14. You're not a bad mom if your kid eats glitter glue.

Definitely do all the childproofing you can. Lock up everything you own and duct tape down the toilet seat.

But know that it's super likely that at some point in their early lives, you'll call poison control. They're chill and friendly and helpful, and will talk you down from your new-mom freak out.

And to reassure you, here's a list of things the offspring of my (clearly negligent) mom friends have ingested: gel air freshener ("Springtime Dew" scent), diaper rash cream, eye makeup remover, an entire roll of Tums, glow sticks, a full baby wipe, half tube of toothpaste, Wet 'n Wild blush, 31 cents (a quarter, nickel and penny), handful of kitty litter, the plastic end of a shoestring, and six crayons (makes one vibrant diaper).

15. Take advantage of the kindness, wisdom, and support of those who love you.

And the food.

Take all the food they'll bring.

Let your mom vacuum and fold clothes while you nap and let your sister bring you magazines and nipple cream.

Ask questions of new mom friends who've been through it too. Use your girl group and college pals—you held their hair back after too much Jager, they can hold your crying baby while you pump. And then repay it when it's their turn—the spit-up goes around and comes around.

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It's the Golden Rule of Motherhood: deliver casseroles and sweet, fuzzy gifts for others as you would have others deliver food for you— frequently, without being asked, and with zero judgment of the dirty house and un-showered new mama.

More than anything, these days are unlike any other in your life. It's part heavenly, part hard. All worth it.

You are forever changed...in the ways of love and leakage.

And P.S. There's NO such thing as holding them too much.