



The 10 Best Pregnancy Tips

By Kelly Nault, M.A.

On the eve of my baby's due date, I am unable to sleep. With baby moving in my belly, Braxton Hicks contractions spontaneously occurring (that often render me helpless, like a beetle on it's back waving its legs), and the enormous pressure in my pelvis that whisks me off to the toilet only to expel an unimpressive thimble full of pee every 15 minutes...I reflect upon the following 10 best parenting advice and pregnancy resources I received.

Pregnancy Tip 1:

Learn to love your belly: Strangers on the street exclaimed, "Wow! Are you big! Must be any day now," when I was a mere four months pregnant. After months of experiencing a pang of panic each time I caught a glimpse of my reflection, I finally came to love my belly in a pregnancy photo shoot my girlfriend gave to me. The photographer was so supportive that I finally began to see myself how others did—a beautiful pregnant woman.

Pregnancy Tip 2:

Beg and borrow maternity clothes: No matter how ugly and how huge some of the maternity pieces seem, accept them all. You truly don't know how big you may get and how comfortable those hideous panels might be later on. Put away your pre-pregnancy clothes once you grow out of them so you aren't constantly grieving the loss of your old wardrobe.

Pregnancy Tip 3:

Let go of your due date: Did you know only 4% of babies are born on their actual due date? Who knew! Once I found out that it is perfectly normal for a baby to arrive anytime between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy, I let go of my due date altogether and followed the scout motto of "be prepared" (at any time during that five week window).

Pregnancy Tip 4:

Learn to enjoy your admiring public: Yes, strangers will sometimes see your belly as public property and dish out a host of comments and advice. My husband helped me to start having fun with this new celebrity status. For instance after being annoyed by comments such as, "Looks like your due any time now!" my husband suggested I say things like, "Yup, any minute now!" or even joke, "Can you believe I'm not due for another 8 months?!" The fact of the matter is most people actually mean well—this milestone in your life brings up fond memories for them.

Pregnancy Tip 5:

Find a health care practitioner you love: The ups and downs of your pregnancy require special support and pregnancy resources. Find someone who welcomes your questions, puts your fears to rest

and supports you in having the best pregnancy and delivery you can. For me I found this support in my midwives who gave me one hour session and even made house calls. Plus, once I found out my midwives' statistics on c-sections, forceps use and episiotomies I was hooked! Other friends hired a doula (birth coach), or had a doctor they loved, and were thrilled with the care they received.

Pregnancy Tip 6:

Listen and learn to trust your body: Surrendering to my cravings (turkey sandwiches with cranberry sauce and chocolate ice cream), the need of extra sleep (sometimes I would simply sit down to rest and suddenly wake up two hours later!) and being gentle with myself was what got me through.

Also, reading parenting books like *The Girlfriends Guide...* (for the humor and practicality), to fabulous hardcore midwifery books like *Ina May's Guide To Pregnancy* (my favorite) helped me to learn to trust my body more than ever before. These books (another good one was *Birthing From Within*) helped to dissolve many of my fears, as I learned things like no matter how big your baby is, babies heads are mostly around the same size, and are designed by nature to make the journey through the birth canal.

Pregnancy Tip 7:

Find other pregnant women and hang out with them: My pre-natal exercise class is a real pregnancy resource blessing. Not only am I getting fit but I found a sense of belonging, where I could really let my belly hang out with the best of them. Whenever I began to pity myself (like on an especially nauseous day) I would find another pregnant woman who was going through a tougher situation (like kidney stones or painful hemorrhoids!), or a real trouper in class would say something that lifted my spirits. Plus, by finding other pregnant women I saved my non-pregnant friends the hassle of listening to me share every play-by-play experience of my pregnancy—which likely saved a few of my friendships. ;-)

Pregnancy Tip 8:

Spend money only on the baby things that will make a real difference to you and borrow or buy the rest second-hand: Babies don't care about paint chips and décor, only about being close to the milk source—you! The fact they will rapidly grow out of any and all clothes helped put my priorities in order. So we splurged on the things that mattered to me: the stroller (as I am a huge walker), a safe car seat (for obvious reasons) and a rocker/glider (once I realized that I could be feeding up to twelve hours a day for the first six weeks).

The rest we either borrowed or bought second-hand, and we saved a mint! By getting so many great deals from places like eBay, and going to local 'mothers of multiples' sales I saved enough to put away for extra cleaning hours, and a special service to bring meals in during the first three months of our child's life.

Pregnancy Tip 9:

'Morning sickness' can happen at anytime!: Morning sickness can happen at any hour of the day, all day or not at all. Fortunately not often, it can even creep into the second or third trimester like it did with me.

Pregnancy Tip 10:

Everyone's experience of pregnancy is different, so take what is useful and ignore the rest: So many experiences and so many people dishing out advice. What I have observed is that *pregnancy for the most part is the great equalizer—if you don't get something on one end you'll likely get something on the other*. Fortunately, whatever our pregnancy experience may be, the majority of us end up with a little bundle of joy that makes the journey worth all the effort.

I am off to bed now to join my sleeping husband and my five pillows that prop up my bountiful belly, my buxom boobs and weary head. As I go off to sleep, I go with gratitude in my heart, knowing that soon we

will be welcoming a beautiful new addition into our little family. This truly is the greatest parenting miracle of all.

Kelly Nault-Matzen, MA, family counselor, corporate parenting spokesperson and award winning parenting author of *When You're About To Go Off The Deep End, Don't Take Your Kids With You* shares time-tested tools that motivate children to want to be well behaved, responsible and happy! To gain access to more parenting tools and to access your free online parenting course visit www.ultimateparenting.com

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