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Photography: Nick Prendergast

**PUBLISHER/
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
joylyn niebes

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
lauren niebes

EDITORIAL
INTERIM EDITOR
Shelley Hawes Pate
MANAGING EDITOR
Nicole Jordan

ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR
elizabeth smith
WEB EDITOR
carrie steingruber
EDITORIAL INTERN
mollie jamison

ART
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
susan horn

EDITORIAL DESIGNER
katie galasso

ADVERTISING
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES
samantha barnhart, louise
greco-stein, susan hassel,
meredith liewehr, nancy
mcdaniel, sandi mckean,
keia pile

PR/MARKETING
PR/MARKETING ASSISTANT
kristen niebes

ADMINISTRATION
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
ashley pigott
OPERATIONS
leah wagner

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MOM-TO-BE: LAUREN ZOUCHA



One of the few lucky enough to do what she loves, Lauren Zoucha has made a career out of creating. Whether at her day job in marketing

for Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU) in Waxahachie or tackling special projects for her graphic design-slash-wedding photography company Zuka Creative, 24-year-old Lauren never misses an opportunity to flex her creative muscle. Today, after two years of marriage to her college sweetheart, Anthony, who also works for SAGU in IT, Lauren is five months pregnant and awaiting the arrival of her greatest creation yet: Sophia Grace.

SO WAS THE PREGNANCY PLANNED OR A SURPRISE?

It was planned. We were planning on starting to try around our second anniversary and we were surprised that we got pregnant right away. It was exciting and a little shocking at the same time!

TELL ME ABOUT FINDING OUT YOU WERE PREGNANT.

I was starting to feel some symptoms, but I was a little skeptical. I had taken a pregnancy test a little early and it came back negative. I waited about a week and a half and woke up that morning and thought, "I think I want to take one this morning." So I did and it turned out positive. I was kind of freaking out by myself because I get up before my husband. Later that afternoon, we were by ourselves and I had the test in a plastic bag. I set it on his lap and said, "I have something for you." We were both really excited. Since he had wanted kids too, he didn't really get the jitters about it. He was genuinely happy.

HOW HAS YOUR PERCEPTION OF BEING PREGNANT DIFFERED

FROM THE REALITY? HAVE THERE BEEN ANY SURPRISES?

I was definitely surprised at the side effects of pregnancy and how many changes the woman's body actually [undergoes]. You see photos of beaming pregnant women in books and magazines, but the reality is much different!

HOW EXCITED ARE THE GRANDPARENTS?

Oh my word! They're just over the moon. On my side, it will be the first grandbaby. My mom is the epitome of baby fever. We're blessed to have a lot of support on both sides. They're definitely all very happy for us.

HOW'S THE PREGNANCY GOING?

The first trimester was rough with the nausea and the fatigue, but slowly that's starting to get better. My appetite has been picking up a lot more, which is kind of funny because normally I eat like a bird. Now I'll have two bowls of cereal *and* a banana for breakfast.

ANY ODD CRAVINGS?

Not anything weird. But — even more than normal — I like

spicy foods. I like Mexican food and Chick-fil-A. I could eat those *all* the time.

YOU RECENTLY FOUND OUT IT'S A GIRL! WERE YOU HOPING FOR A GIRL?

I was really trying to stay neutral. I think deep down I thought it might be a girl, but I was going to be happy either way. But I am really excited it's going to be a girl!

HOW'S ANTHONY HANDLING IMPENDING FATHERHOOD?

Really well. I think it's the most precious thing — he'll talk to my belly and he's wanting to get books, so we can read to the baby. He's been really supportive.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING ABOUT LABOR AND DELIVERY?

I'm kind of taking the stance, "Don't think about it because it's not going to help anything." I think we'll definitely do classes. I'm not totally going to ignore it, but I'll just take it as it goes. I hear you forget all the bad stuff once you see your baby, so I'm hoping that's the way it goes.

ARE YOUR MATERNAL INSTINCTS KICKING IN?

Yes, I would say I'm more aware of being safe and eating healthy. Different senses are more alert.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO ABOUT SOPHIA GRACE'S ARRIVAL?

It's hard to pinpoint one thing — getting to hold her and raise her I guess. Just the everyday sort of things, getting to teach her and see the first of everything.

LAUREN'S 9 PREGNANCY MUST-HAVES



1 Blue Bell All Natural Fruit Bars (Lime): Make for a healthy and refreshing snack, and were edible even during nausea.



2 Palmer's Cocoa Butter Formula Tummy Butter: This tummy butter will not break the bank and has amazing reviews. I'm a fan so far!



3 CamelBak Water Bottle: I love having this water bottle around to help me remember to stay hydrated.



4 Germ-X Hand Sanitizer: Though basic, it's important to remember that a pregnant immune system is working overtime, so this is great to keep in your purse.

5 Maxi Dresses: In general, I have found maxi dresses to be super comfortable and unrestricting. They work for the office or can be great for a more causal look.

6 Preggie Pop Drops: During first trimester nausea, these drops really helped to take the edge off.

7 Secret Fit Belly Maternity Skirts: Motherhood Maternity's skirts are so comfortable — without looking like obvious maternity clothes. Your belly can stay fashionable and comfortable!

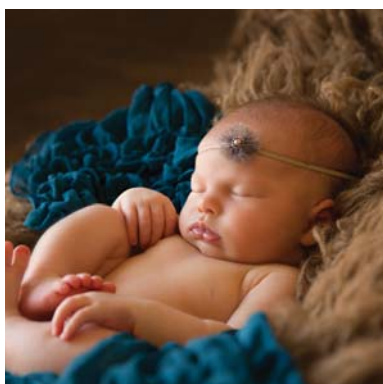


8 What To Expect App: I love having a video update on the baby's progress every week. They also have a variety of fun and informative articles to read.



9 Young Living Peppermint Essential Oil: This serves as a natural way to help ease headaches and nausea. ●

Find these items near you — see page 35.



maternity newborn children & families



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BED REST SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to get by when you can't get up and about



While resting sounds nice in theory, you've got way too much to do before junior arrives to be propped up on pillows all day. But staying put (and staying sane) is best for you and for

baby, so we corralled Melissa Espey-Mueller and Kiesha Baker, both of North Dallas Doula Associates, along with Stephanie D. Johnson, founder and CEO of Bed Rest Concierge, to steal their secrets for surviving confinement. Here's their how-to manual in a nutshell:

1. PAMPER YOURSELF.

Keep up your beauty routines to feel fabulous for your next Netflix binge. Being good to yourself can be good for you: Baker says that high blood pressure is the No. 1 reason her clients go on bed rest, but an in-home massage from a prenatal massage therapist can lower your blood pressure and do wonders for your mood.

2. FIND WAYS TO COMMUNICATE.

If you're stuck at the hospital, employ Skype or FaceTime to stay in touch with friends and family. If you're stuck in your bed upstairs, keep a walkie-talkie or baby monitor with you so you can give orders from afar.

3. REACH OUT.

"You can only watch so much Lifetime," Baker jokes. In between consuming 28 parenting books and ten seasons of *Grey's*, schedule visits from your favorite people. You'll appreciate the company, and they'll appreciate the chance to

spend time with you before baby arrives. Espey-Mueller also suggests finding an online community of bed-resting moms to share your questions and experiences.

4. OUTSOURCE.

Enlisting others to do the heavy lifting is not just doctor's orders, but also the only way to get things done. Local moms have options:

Bed Rest Concierge. BRC (972/302-2827; bedrestconcierge.net) can do just about anything — nursery design, laundry, birth announcements — but moms particularly appreciate the mobile spa services ("Who doesn't want a little glamor during bed rest?" quips Johnson). BRC gives you the option to pay a monthly fee for access to all their services, or you can order up a manicure or facial as needed.

Personal shoppers. All Dallas-area Whole Foods locations (wholefoods.com) offer a concierge service; with 24 hours notice, the concierge team will shop to your specifications and deliver the goods to your door. Online ser-

vices like Artizone (artizone.com/dallas) and Greenling (greenling.com) will also grab grub from local farms and restaurants to leave on your doorstep.

Antepartum doulas. Some doulas specialize in taking care of mom pre-baby; North Dallas Doula Associates (northdallas-doulas.com) provides antepartum assistance in addition to birth and postpartum services.

5. LEARN SOMETHING NEW.

The Internet has more online tutorials and classes than you can wade through in a decade of bed rests (no thanks), including childbirth classes. Espey-Mueller recommends the online childbirth class available through local Baylor hospitals; enroll at baylorhealth.com.

6. GET READY FOR BABY.

Take advantage of your free time to cross items off your to-do list: address your baby announcements, pick out a stroller and car seat, decide on The Name, start your baby book, order the finishing touches for the nursery, even coordinate with your church or neighbors to schedule meal delivery postpartum.

7. DON'T BE A REBEL.

"Follow the rules and listen," Baker emphasizes. "That's how you're taking care of your baby." ●

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“Baylor successfully treated
my child's *feeding disorder*.”

Tara D'Alessandro, born severely premature, needed a tube down her throat for the first five months of her life to help her breathe. As a result, she couldn't stand to have anything near or in her mouth. Her mother, Cassie, brought Tara, now 3 1/2, to the inpatient feeding program at Our Children's House at Baylor. There, a team of health care professionals, including a physical therapist, occupational therapist and speech-language pathologist, used positive reinforcement to gradually change her eating behavior. Tara now eats four meals a day and is being weaned off her tube feedings. “Baylor was the only place that was able to help her. She has so much more energy since she began eating. It's wonderful to see her eating like a typical child.”



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NAMING YOUR BABY

A how-not-to guide

“

I really did like my name,” says Jala (pronounced JAY luh) Hyde, a local mom. “I still do – it’s just so unique!”

“I’ve never liked my name,” adds her sister J’Layna (jay LAY nuh) Riddles of Garland. “I like the sound of it, but from a very young age I’ve always had to explain to people how to spell my name. It’s just been frustrating, even as an adult.”

A tale of two sisters: one whose name has two capitals and a punctuation mark, and the other whose name came from a defunct paper towel brand. (Gala with a “J” — “I could have been Jounty or Jiva or anything!”) One who’s embraced the unconventional origin of her name, and the other who point-blank asked her mother, “What were you thinking? Were you still drugged up?”

The moral of their story: Someone else — namely, your child — has to live with the moniker you choose.

If you’re like a lot of moms-to-be, you’ve had a dossier of potential names filed away in your brain since you were 11. But now that it’s finally time to pick The Name, you may want to consider factors other than how much you like each candidate. Here are some points to consider — and then selectively ignore — when choosing your baby’s name.

Don’t give your baby a name that’s unusual or hard to pronounce. It’s difficult to picture the black-and-white dot on your sonogram donning a suit for his first

interview, but this baby isn’t going to stay a baby forever. A real, live person has to go to kindergarten and seventh grade and college and lunch with the HR rep and acknowledge the name you give him, whether it’s Noah (currently No. 1 in the U.S.) or Xyz (actually a name).

J’Layna has been forced to answer for her name since she was old enough to struggle through learning to spell it. “When as a child someone would ask my name, I would just cringe,” she says. “Yes, two capital letters. J-apostrophe-L. ‘What does the apostrophe stand in for?’ Nothing, it’s just an apostrophe ... Just call me J.” While an unusual name like J’Layna may sound good in theory, your child — not you — has to deal with the real-life ramifications.

“When your teacher pronounces the name and you have to correct them, that in your own little child’s mind feels like, ‘Oh, I did something wrong,’” says Sarah Feuerbacher, Ph.D., LCSW-S, clinic director at the Southern Methodist University Center for Family Counseling in Plano and chronic sufferer of (last)

name mispronunciation. She adds that being singled out for any reason can damage a child’s confidence in those formative years, especially if the child hasn’t been taught how to respond when others butcher her name.

The pronunciation woes don’t stop after graduation: A 2012 study by professors at the University of Melbourne and New York University demonstrated that people with easy-to-pronounce names are more likely to be interviewed, hired and promoted than their counterparts with baffling monikers. “People simply aren’t aware of the subtle impact that names can have on their judgments,” says Adam Alter, Ph.D., associate professor of marketing at NYU and co-author of the study. Names that don’t require mental gymnastics make others more comfortable and subconsciously leave a positive impression. In other words, if you want your child to succeed in life, go for Max or Mary.

Don’t give your baby a common name. Not so fast. Feuerbacher says her very pronounceable first name was no refuge either. As the tallest of several Sarahs in her class, she was dubbed “Big Sarah.” “That one was hard for me,” she admits. “I wanted to be ‘Little Sarah’ or just ‘Sarah.’”

That’s exactly why Jala likes her name. “Right now I have four friends named Sarah and six Brittany and that drives me crazy,” she says. “It’s

ridiculous. They do go by their last names, and I never had to." She's already irritated that her 4-year-old son Jackson isn't the only Jackson on the block. "There's a whole slew of Jacksons in the 3-5 age range, and I don't like it. I wish it wasn't as common for his age group." (Jackson rose last year to No. 16, for the record.)

And while J'Layna speaks bitterly of her name, she does admit that it "might have gotten me an email response or a phone call back for an interview just because it stood out in the stack." Feuerbacher agrees that a name like J'Layna could make your child stand out in a good way, especially when submitting that first resume. Jackson? Not so much.

Don't worry too much about your baby's name. Yes, a name might make the difference between one job and another. But The Name is not the arbiter of your child's success. "You can have a very confident child with a boring name; you can have a very unconfident child with the most wonderful name," Feuerbacher says. She stresses that a name is but one small part of a child's identity, and that a likable personality can override an unlikeable name.

If you choose to bless your child with an unusual name, Feuerbacher recommends role-playing potential sticky situations so that your child learns the confidence to own his name, rather than shy away ashamed when the world gets it wrong. Her 4-year-old son Taylor has a unisex name, so she goes out of her way to practice a response if people assume he's a girl. "I'm doing my best to advocate for him, and hopefully one day he too can proudly advocate for himself because he's seen me do it," explains Feuerbacher.

Don't force a name on your baby. If for some strange reason your child does not like the perfect name you've bestowed upon him, don't require him to use it anyway. "The biggest thing adults could do is encourage kids to come up with something that they feel comfortable with," Feuerbacher says. She was relieved when the nickname "Fire" caught on, rather than "Big Sarah." "I loved it. It fit my personality; it was part of my last name," she recalls. "But I picked it out."

Just as Feuerbacher's dime-a-dozen name made her uncomfortable, a bespoke name can make a child stand out more than he'd prefer. Allow your child to blend in a little if he wants. Feuerbacher advises, "Let the child when they are old enough say, 'I want to go by Anne instead of Crystal Light.'"

Don't let anyone else tell you how to name your baby. No matter what you name your baby, there is a potential for silly nicknames or anonymity or general confusion. So ignore all the advice from mothers-in-law, friends and baby magazines and name your baby what you want to name him. It's your baby, after all.

Just don't name him Xyz. ●



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RUN ON

The experts debunk myths surrounding running during pregnancy

Ah, running. It's a love-hate relationship, we admit (mostly love ... really!). Like millions, we enjoy the health benefits associated with running, but even more than that, we run because it's a part of who we are. Running is not just exercise; it's a lifestyle.

Far too often, however, women give up running as soon as they see double pink lines. Some are afraid that if they continue to run throughout their 40 weeks of gestation, they risk sabotaging the pregnancy. Others are told by well-meaning, but uninformed, friends and family members that running will cause irreparable harm to the fetus.

Unfortunately, there are a multitude of unfounded myths regarding exercise during pregnancy, usually based upon one or more common myths specifically associated with running during pregnancy.

MYTH 1

Pregnant women who exercise increase their chances of having a miscarriage.

Reality

At least one in five pregnancies ends in miscarriage, regardless of whether a woman exercises during her pregnancy or not. There is no convincing evidence indicating that pregnant women who engage in a safe, non-contact form of moderate exercise, like running, are at increased risk for miscarriage.

MYTH 2

Pregnant women who exercise increase their chances of giving birth preterm.

Reality

Studies have suggested that exercise will in fact decrease, rather than increase, the chances of preterm birth.

MYTH 3

Pregnant women should keep their heart rates under 140 beats per minute at all times, including during exercise.

Reality

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) abandoned recommendations that pregnant women limit their heart rates years ago because heart rates can vary so widely in response to exercise. The current recommendation is to use the Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) as the measure of exercise intensity. The Borg RPE system utilizes a scale with a lowest level of 6, which signifies no exertion at all, and a highest level of 20, which signifies maximal exertion. ACOG recommends pregnant women stay within the 12–14 range on the Borg RPE scale, which correlates to a “somewhat to moderately hard” level of exertion.

MYTH 4

Women who exercise during pregnancy give birth to low birth-weight babies.

Reality

The evidence suggests that low birth weight is not a problem for pregnant women who exercise as long as they avoid calorie restriction and continue to consume a healthy diet that includes an adequate amount of calories. Women who exercise do, however, generally give birth to healthy, leaner babies who have less fat.

MYTH 5

If a pregnant woman exercises to the point of sweating, she has raised her body temperature too high and is causing damage to her unborn child.

Reality

According to a 2002 ACOG report, a woman's internal body temperature increases by 1.5 degrees in the first thirty minutes of moderate exercise and will stay at that level for the next thirty minutes of exercise due to the body's ability to cool itself by sweating. ACOG is not aware of any reports that hyperthermia, or elevated body temperature, associated with exercise will result in birth defects in humans. ●

Tim Gargiulo is a former nationally ranked road racer and a 1996 U.S. Olympic Trials finalist in 5000 meters. His wife Elizabeth Stevenson-Gargiulo has been in private practice as an obstetrician/gynecologist in Dallas for nearly 13 years and has taken care of dozens of women who ran during their pregnancies. She is a veteran of nine marathons and ran throughout her entire pregnancy. For more tips on running during pregnancy, visit runningthroughpregnancy.com.



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With baby No. 2 on the way, stationary designer Caroline Hull left it up to the experts at Grit + Gold Studio in Fort Worth to plan her shower. Event planner Lottie Fowler chose a tribal theme and used a striped teepee from B.E. Little You and Me for the focal point of the party. After receiving custom invitations from Hush Art Co., Caroline's friends arrived to celebrate the newest member of the Hull tribe, baby Maeve.

Lottie used potted cactus and flowers from We + You Studios in Lewisville, incorporating natural wood to set the vibe.



Attendees sipped raspberry lemonade and cucumber water while filling hand-stamped kraft bags from The Antipodean Project with caramel popcorn.



To help Caroline adorn the walls of Maeve's nursery, guests chose from a variety of printed and chevron fabrics and made decorative hoops.



After crafts, guests enjoyed a homemade red velvet Bundt cake with cream cheese frosting and banana nut, blueberry, wild berry and chocolate chip muffins topped with arrow picks from peppermintandwish. Sweets were served on mismatched vintage china from Rent My Dust in Grapevine.





HELLO

HOLA

NEW MOM: WHITNEY ROSE

W

hen Whitney Rose tearfully tendered her resignation as a Spanish teacher in exchange for life as a stay-at-home, first-time mom to now 4-month-old Kennedy, she wasn't sure what

to expect. Midnight feedings and messy diapers were a given, but fun? She says she had no idea how much fun was in store. We met up with 29-year-old Whitney in her East Dallas home to chat about adventures in parenthood with her photographer husband Carter and life as a brand-new family of three.

DID YOU AND CARTER BOTH KNOW YOU WANTED KIDS EARLY ON?

I wanted kids right out of the gate and Carter was like, "Let's wait a couple years." So we waited seven years. We got a dog four years in to stave off the baby.

DID IT HELP?

It did help! They're not comparable at all, but it's still a sense of responsibility.

HOW'S KENNEDY DOING?

She's good! She's a happy girl. She likes to laugh with Carter the most. She's pretty easy. Fingers crossed it stays that way. We're having a good time. As much as it is exhausting, it's great. It's really fun.

WAS IT HARD TO LEAVE TEACHING?

It was such a hard choice for me to stay home, but I love being home with her. I didn't anticipate that I would so love it. It's the best ever.

WILL SHE BE RAISED TO BE BILINGUAL?

That's definitely the goal. I'm looking forward to passing that along.

HOW WAS YOUR PREGNANCY?

My first trimester was brutal. I was so exhausted. I didn't anticipate being completely useless. Literally, I would come home from school and lie down on the couch and go to sleep until Carter would give me something to eat and then I'd go to bed. Once I got through that, I was fine.

DID YOU FIND OUT THE SEX AHEAD OF TIME?

We did. There's always so much mystery and excitement and stress that it's like ... I need to know. So we found out she was going to be a girl. We just love her so much it's stupid. It's the only thing we think about. When we go to bed at night, we look at her pictures on our phone, and when that's not enough, we go in her room and just stare at her. Your brain just turns to baby goo. It's awesome.

HOW DOES THE REALITY OF DAY-TO-DAY COMPARE TO ANY EXPECTATIONS YOU HAD?

I had no idea how unproductive I would be. You have to really recalibrate your expectations for what you're going to "accomplish" and be satisfied in saying, "OK. I

took care of my daughter today and that's enough."

HOW DO YOU THINK YOU'VE CHANGED SINCE BECOMING A MOM?

You're not yourself anymore. You're there for them. It's like that switch happens instantaneously. Some of that is maternal instinct, but there's some maternal instinct I did not get. Just because you're a mom doesn't mean that you immediately get this huge wealth of knowledge. You need to call on others and that's a good thing.

HOW HAS MARRIED LIFE CHANGED?

It's different. You really have to take time to say, "OK what are you interested in? What's happening in your life?" And it's hard to do. I don't know that we're successful at it every single day, but I think also seeing Carter love her so well and be such a great dad solidifies our marriage. It's just a love fest. But that's how it should be.

HAVE YOU MADE IT OUT FOR DATE NIGHT?

Yeah. I remember the first time we had babysitters come over. We got in the car and were like, "Maybe we should just pull into the driveway and sleep in the car ... because we're so tired."

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO EXPERIENCING WITH KENNEDY AS SHE GROWS?

We can't wait to hear her talk and teach her another language ... her singing with Carter and playing guitar ... I'm hoping she enjoys the things we do.

WHITNEY'S 10 BABY MUST-HAVES



- 1 Noodle & Boo Lotion:**
Moisturizer? Sure. Spit up cover-up? You betcha! It smells the best!



- 2 HALO SleepSack Swaddle:**
The zipper and Velcro wings make it easy to use in the stupor of that first sleepless month.

- 3 Kickee Pants Pajamas:**
Super snugly and soft!

- 4 Brica Fold'n Go Travel Bassinet:** Awesome travel-friendly alternative to the Pack 'N Play.

- 5 Ruby Love Baby Book:**
Totally affordable and customizable, plus no cartoon animals.



- 6 WubbaNub Pacifiers:** Big enough to find blindly from the front seat, plus the long neck of the giraffe is easy for her to grasp.



- 7 Dapple Pacifier Wipes:**
For when even I don't want to suck the germs off of the paci.

- 8 Birth Pictures by f8studio:**
Gary Donihoo of f8studio captured Kennedy's birth day. Priceless.

- 9 Moby Wrap:** Hands-free infant holding all the way. I can buy my groceries and no one touches her while she's completely snug to my chest.



- 10 Ducks in a Row Personal Organization Service:** Nothing is more essential, as a new mom, than an organized nursery and home to restore sanity during those chaotic first weeks. ●

Find these items near you — see page 35.



WE'RE DOING MORE THAN SHAPING HEADS. WE'RE SHAPING LIVES.

Infant head shape abnormalities (plagiocephaly) are more common since the Back to Sleep campaign started in the '90s. Choosing treatment may not be easy. But if it is your child, the company you choose has to be the best.

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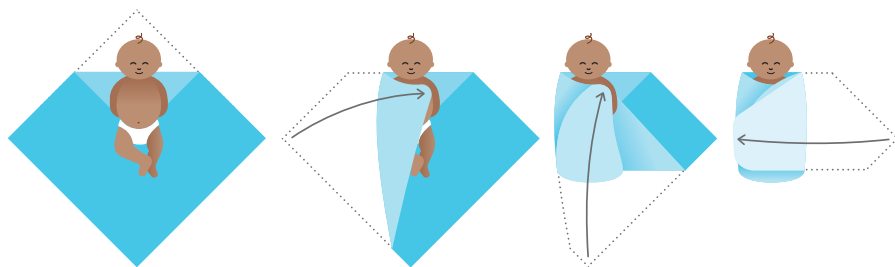
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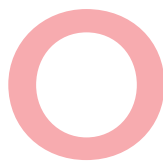


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IT'S A WRAP!

How to master the art of swaddling



One of the first things you will notice when the nurse gives you your baby (after he's been cleaned up) is that he looks nice and cozy wrapped snugly in a swaddle. But like refolding a map (at least when we all used to read them), duplicating the expert work of a professional (read: pediatric nurse) can be quite a challenge for new parents. Sure, these wrap artists can help you when you're still at the hospital, but once you return home, you're on your own.

Swaddles help your baby feel warm, enclosed and secure — just the way things used to be in your tummy before giving birth. But aside from mimicking that still-in-the-womb feeling, swaddles also prevent babies from flailing their bodies, waking themselves up.

According to Dr. Marjorie Milici, a pediatrician with Baylor Pediatric Center in Dallas, "Swaddling contains a baby from their newborn erratic movements that can upset them, because they cannot control the movement of their hands, arms, legs or feet."

So how do you properly swaddle your little one so you can both find the sweet relief of sleep? Here are a few basic steps to help you do it right:

1. Arrange the blanket with the corners to the side.
2. Fold the top corner down about the length of baby's head.
3. With baby on the blanket, position his head slightly higher than the fold.

4. Take one side of the blanket over baby's chest, just over one shoulder and down, covering the same arm; tuck under baby's back with the opposite arm exposed.

5. Bring the bottom corner up and tuck it into the first wrap across baby's chest, covering his feet.

6. Take the remaining side of the blanket over the exposed shoulder, bringing it slightly down across baby's chest and tuck it under as the final fold in your tidy package; be mindful that baby's face is not covered by the blanket.

But even with the clearest of directions, perfecting the swaddle may still be a challenge for some parents. Your little bean may also be a little Houdini — one who can magically wiggle himself out (then hate the fact that he is no longer wrapped). Thankfully, there are plenty of blankets and sleep sacks now on the market that try to do all the hard work for you. Search "baby swaddle" on etsy.com and you'll come across dozens of handmade

versions (made with gorgeous textiles, to boot).

Swaddling is typically used in the first three months of life; however, as pointed out by Milici, "The new recommendations are that babies stop being swaddled at 2 months. SIDS is usually highest at 2–6 months. The new recommendations are based on the fear that after 2 months a baby may be able to move out of the swaddling blanket."

Additionally, Milici advises that parents should be careful not to swaddle their babies too tightly as it may hamper their breathing.

Stephanie Parker, who hails from Fort Worth, has actually created a transitional blanket of sorts, which has garnered praise from moms around the U.S. Her Zipadee-Zip wearable blanket is meant to serve as a happy medium between swaddling and being able to move more freely to help make the shift away from a tight swaddle less abrupt.

Even Milici admits that she swaddled her own children well after they were 2–3 months old. "I personally swaddled my children until about 9 months," she reveals. "Mostly because they hated if their arms or legs flailed around. It would make them cry and awaken a good sleep. I think this is a good discussion to have [when to stop swaddling] and [realize] every baby is different." ●

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BABY

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends children have their first dental check up by age one.

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FINDING FATHERHOOD

5 ways to help your husband ease into being a dad

No matter how many books you read, nurseries you decorate or five-point lists you make, nothing prepares you for having a child — except having one. It's like dumping a bucket of ice water over your head, except the water never stops and the temperature keeps changing.

New mothers often worry if their spouses will be good dads. Can a man be caring enough to establish a loving bond? It doesn't matter if a father is blue collar or white collar, a northerner or a southerner; all men are capable. If anything, this is a generation of fathers who want to be involved but don't know where to start in today's environment, which is heavily geared toward moms.

New dads can be hesitant, but that does not mean they don't want to learn. Here are five ways for new moms to help new dads ease into this thing called fatherhood.

DON'T CRUSH THEM WITH LISTS

When you have your first child, neither parent knows what to do. Moms focus the fear of the unknown into an unending pursuit of books, blogs and WebMD, while dads hope to find a parenting video that uses '80s references and explosions as teaching points. Guys don't have the same hulking expectations from society and can get overwhelmed by bottle-preparation lists longer than most

car owner manuals. Lists are fine, but discussions are better.

CHAMPION THEIR ACTIONS

Every dad has to start somewhere — that might be rocking a baby to sleep or cleaning up a fecal blowout from an infant's hair. Dads don't deserve a medal for changing one diaper, but encourage their actions on the level they're on. Fatherhood requires consistent engagement, so when you see that, tell them you noticed.

LEAVE THEM ALONE WITH THE BABY

Staying home with your child by yourself is like getting into a pool: painful and slow if you take it an inch at a time, but shocking and quick if you dive right in. Fathers need to know they can trust themselves, and the only way to learn that is to take the plunge.

GIVE THEM A WINK

The last thing you're thinking about after having a baby is sex. We, on the other hand, have a big, red mental circle around the date six weeks from now. I realize that

sounds insensitive, but it's a symptom of the greater fear that you'll devote all your attention to our child, putting our relationship on hold. While we wait patiently with you, remember, a little flirt goes a long way.

PUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP FIRST

Having a child is like dropping a bomb on your marriage. It doesn't matter how prepared you *think* you are, you have no idea what it's like until you've cleaned poop out of your carpet at 3am. If you put your kids first, they might be okay. If you put your relationship first, they absolutely will be fine.

New dads are not perfect and never will be — same goes for new moms. But fathers today are entering parenthood with more resources and encouragement than ever before. Having a child demands limitless levels of patience. Working together to reach that goal may sound impossible at first, but you'll be amazed at how a night of projectile vomit can bring two people together. Communication is the key, so talk and be ready to listen. You'll see what an awesome dad he can be. ●

David Kepley lives in Waxahachie with his wife and two young boys. While his wife flies the friendly skies, David is an at-home dad, event organizer for Dallas City Dads Group and blogger at Just a Dad 247 (justadad247.com).

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FLAT HEAD FEARS

Baby's head starting to look lopsided? You're not the only one whose little one may be suffering from plagiocephaly.

W

hen my little one started sporting a flat spot on the left side of the back of his head, I began to worry. "What if it doesn't go away?" I asked myself. I spoke to my pediatrician about it at his 2-month well-baby visit. His prescription? Tummy time — lots of it, as often as possible, except while sleeping.

While the "Back to Sleep" program has decreased the number of SIDS deaths significantly, positional plagiocephaly — otherwise known as "flat head syndrome" — in infants has been on the rise. But putting baby on his back during naptime and bedtime isn't the only culprit (the American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends all infants be put to sleep on their backs). Prolonged time in car seats, baby swings and bouncy chairs are also to blame.

According to Eric H. Hubli, M.D., director of craniofacial and cleft services at Cook Children's Medical Center, "The greatest risk of onset is in the first six months of life, because this is when most babies spend a great amount of time on their back. At this time, the skull is pliable, sutures are open and brain/skull growth is rapid."

Tummy time or any time spent keeping pressure away from baby's still-malleable skull is the best way to prevent positional

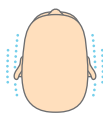
3 TYPES OF PLAGIOCEPHALY



Plagiocephaly:
Infant's head is lopsided
and resembles a
parallelogram shape.



Brachycephaly:
Infant's head appears
equally flat on both sides
of head, causing it to look
wider and shorter.



Scaphocephaly:
Infant's head appears
long and narrow.

plagiocephaly. Though baby needs to sleep on her back, Hubli suggests parents change their infant's sleeping position nightly (lay baby on her head's left side one night, on her right the next and continue to alternate) so baby is less likely to find a favorite spot to rest her head on.

"After 6 to 9 months, most babies are better able to support their heads and stabilize their bodies. As such, the risk of pressure deforming the skull diminishes," Hubli notes.

Personally, my son never liked tummy time, despite me getting down on my hands and knees to his eye level and placing mirrors and toys in front of him. At the same time, I couldn't stand to leave him to wail while he struggled. Fortunately, there are other ways to get baby off his back and give those developing neck and shoulder muscles the workout they need.

Alternatives include laying baby across your lap or holding him upright with his head over your shoulder (according to the National Institutes of Health). Parents can also try wearing their little one. "Babywearing is a very effective tool in the prevention of plagiocephaly," shares Diana Coote of Canada, mother and creator of ergonomic baby carrier Onya Baby. "With babywearing, you don't have to worry about scheduling it in, as is the general recommendation for tummy time."

If prevention is no longer an option and baby's head is unresponsive or getting worse despite tummy time and repositioning efforts, treatment may be necessary to reshape your infant's skull. This is usually where cranial orthotics or repositioning helmets come into play.

Helmets can be custom-fitted according to your baby's head

and made to distribute pressure where necessary. The flattened spots are therefore relieved from further weight and stress.

Helmets, however, recently came under fire when an article, which appeared in *The New York Times* last May, questioned the effectiveness of the devices based on a study published in the *British Medical Journal*. The topic drew criticism from medical experts and specialists around the world, as well as parents who saw results in their own children.

Tim Littlefield, vice president of research and development at Cranial Technologies, a company that has specialized in cranial orthotics since 1988, cautions that very few people actually read the study in depth. "It has so many flaws within it," he adds. For instance, the products that were used in the study are not regulated in Britain and did not fit properly. "If you have a poor-fitting helmet, you're not going to get the results you want, or it'll make matters worse ... the study made a blanket conclusion that *all* helmets are not effective," he clarifies.

Here in the U.S., cranial orthotics are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration's strict

standards; moreover, each helmet needs to be properly fitted for each individual. "You can't really make a small, medium, large," says Littlefield. "Every child's head is like a snowflake. There are no two heads that are deformed in exactly the same way."

Local mom of five Amber Dunn (not her real name) saw great results from her kids who all wore helmets to treat their varying degrees of flat heads. She

says four of her little ones were helmet-free within the average treatment period of 2–3 months. One son, who has other physical challenges, suffered from severe plagiocephaly that required a series of helmets over many months. But all five cases were ultimately corrected. "We were amazed to see the final results of our babies' heads when treatment was over," she says.

Experts caution that treatment is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. "It is not a 'must' that one treat positional plagiocephaly," says Hubli. "Positional plagiocephaly is not a progressive disease; the brain is fine."

So, if you notice your little one's head starting to get a flat spot, make sure to observe its progress but don't panic. The earlier you're attentive to it, the better the chances of treating it without having to go to more extreme measures. ●



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLISS PHOTOGRAPHY



THIRD-TIME MOM: TANA ROBERTS

W

ith her cool-as-a-cucumber demeanor, it can be hard to believe Tana Roberts is a mom to three children under 5. Perhaps her career as a pediatrician in private practice has some-

thing to do with the calm and collected vibe she exudes? Just weeks after giving birth to baby Mary, the 35-year-old mom graciously welcomed us into her University Park home to dish on life with a trio of littles and how she balances medicine with motherhood while corralling 4-year-old Ella, 2-year-old Luke and a brand-new baby alongside Tim, her husband of 11 years.

IS THREE THE MAGIC NUMBER?

Yes! I think we were OK with two. She was a little surprise, but we're so excited.

HOW ARE ELLA AND LUKE DOING WITH THE NEW BABY?

Ella is great. She's a little mom. She's very nurturing. Luke is very sweet, but he's been a little more needy. Just typical ... he was the baby and he's still little. But they're very sweet kids. No big meltdowns yet.

AND HOW ARE YOU AND TIM?

It's an adjustment. With two you each have a hand. You're a little outnumbered with the third. I feel complete with her, but it's juggling the schedule. That part is a big adjustment. But this part is so fast, so I'm trying to hunker down and know that this is going to get better. She's not always going to eat 10 times a day.

HOW DOES YOUR CAREER AS A PEDIATRICIAN INFLUENCE THE WAY YOU PARENT?

Hugely. But I think, honestly, the opposite is the bigger effect. I think being a mom has helped me

be a better pediatrician. As a parent there's good and bad, though.

Sometimes you get really worried about the things that you know. But more often than not, if Luke falls and is bleeding everywhere, I'm not going to freak out.

HOW HAS THE FAMILY DYNAMIC SHIFTED NOW THAT YOU'RE A FAMILY OF FIVE?

Right now I feel like Tim and I aren't together. He's upstairs putting them to bed and I'm down here feeding. You're just down here hanging out in the middle of the night ... I watch bad movies. I've been taping hilarious stuff like *17 Again*. You're just a little more isolated. I think that's my main adjustment. I don't feel as together, but that will get better.

DO YOU AND TIM WORK WELL TOGETHER?

He's very helpful — really tries to come in and help at those big, busy times. And then, obviously, bedtime and bath time he's hands-on. You have to be. Not one person can do it all. Or if they do — like single parents — I don't know how they do it. It's amazing.

ANY SURPRISES THE THIRD TIME AROUND?

Delivery was so much easier, so that was a nice surprise. I just felt so great immediately. It was just so nice to not be pregnant anymore and chasing two little ones. Otherwise, I think you always forget how you live in this 2–3-hour schedule all the time. With the others, that's not happening anymore. They tell you if they're hungry.

YOU'LL RETURN TO WORK IN A COUPLE MONTHS; ARE YOU DREADING IT?

A little, but in some ways it's a reprieve. You get a little break. You disconnect, which is helpful for me being really Type A. It's hard to even fathom how I'm going to juggle work. But I did with the others and went back about the same time, and it ended up panning out.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW GOING THROUGH THIS THE THIRD TIME THAT YOU WISH YOU COULD GO BACK AND TELL YOURSELF THE FIRST TIME?

Just relax. There are very few things you can do to hurt [your baby] if you're feeding them and loving them. And it's so fast. The hard part — frequent feedings, limited sleep — is so fast. You'll miss it. Enjoy it and indulge in it because it's very brief. And also ... nursing. It's so hard for some people and always has been for me. But all babies are different. Pregnancy gets harder; babies get easier.

ANY ADVICE FOR FIRST-TIME MOMS-TO-BE?

This is the best thing you'll ever do. I firmly believe that.

TANA'S 8 PARENTING MUST-HAVES

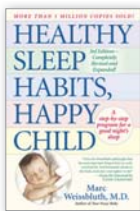


1 My Little Lamb Cradle'n Swing: Hands free! It's nice that the baby gets to feel a little motion and you have your hands free to do other things.

2 *The Happiest Baby on the Block* by Harvey Karp, M.D.: You can get it on Netflix or as a book. It's really nice for dads. It gives tangible, concrete things you can do to help a fussy baby.



3 Aquaphor: I love Aquaphor! It works on so many things — for baby's skin, bottom or any rash, and on sore nipples for Mom. It's just a safe and soothing ointment.



4 Green Sprouts Burp Pads: We have spitty kids!

5 *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child* by Marc Weissbluth, M.D.: It's been around for a while. It's just a nice, educated, evidence-based book on sleeping and what's normal for babies.



6 Letter Quiz app: Also great for toddlers. They can use their finger to trace letters and it's actually in their handwriting.

7 Baby Tracker: Nursing: An app to keep track of how long, how often and on which breast the baby last nursed. If you have three other kids or you're out and about, it's easy to lose track. It's quick and easy to use.



8 Aden & Anais Swaddlers: In muslin or bamboo. They're a great size. They're big enough, but they're very thin, breathable and safe. They have pretty patterns, too. ●

Find these items near you — see page 35.



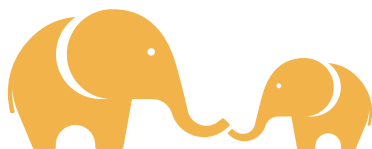
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BIG, MEET LITTLE

Preparing your child to be a big brother or sister

Is baby No. 2 on the way and you're not sure how to prepare your firstborn for siblingdom? The truth is, there is only so much you can control and it is perfectly normal (and expected) for kids to act out in *some* way once a new baby arrives. Below are some things to keep in mind as you and your family await the arrival of a new family member.

Wait to tell a young child you are pregnant until you are really showing (after the risk for miscarriage diminishes). It is often hard

for little ones to understand pregnancy, especially if your belly looks the same as it did before. Wait until you are showing and then gently explain that you have a baby in your tummy. Explain in age-appropriate language with only as much detail as needed. Additionally, I highly recommend waiting until your risk for miscarriage lowers. As hard as loss is on us, it is far harder for our little ones to understand and can be scary and even traumatizing for them.



Time major changes to your home and routine carefully. If

your older child is about to start using the potty or sleeping in a big-boy bed, start this well in advance of baby's arrival (if

possible). If he is going to move into a new room, shift the attention to him becoming a big boy and away from making space for the baby. Keep other routines or activities (soccer, dance, swimming lessons, etc.) as consistent as possible. Kids need consistency to feel safe, secure and grounded.

Spend as much quality time as you can together before (and after) you give birth. Build

memories with your older child and strengthen the bond you share before the new baby arrives. Go to the park, get down on the floor, take silly photos together, get ice cream, go for walks, read together, get manicures, cuddle just a little longer in their bed at night and read that extra story. Build on the foundation you already have with your child; reassure him of your bond, of your love, of his importance to you. Maintain special time with your older child once baby arrives. Much of your attention will be going to the new baby, so having that special one-on-one time with your older child will



be rewarding for both of you.

Involve your older child as you prepare for baby. Many moms find it helpful to read books to their children on becoming a big brother or sister. You can also talk with them about possible baby names, as it can be a fun and

lighthearted way to talk about the baby. It might be useful to show your child photos of when he was a baby and how excited



you were when he first came home. Or, consider an "exchange" of gifts between the baby and the older child. Talk to your child about being a big brother or sister and how important they will be to their little sibling.



Include your older child in the experience once baby arrives. Dallas mom Jennifer Helms let her son hold the baby before anyone else, stressing that she feels this is extremely important no matter what time of day (or night) the baby is born. Another Dallas mom, Lauren Garrity, recalls that when Big Sister first came to the

hospital, "I told her it was her baby brother's birthday party [and] we blew bubbles and celebrated together!" Older kids, even preschoolers, can help once the baby is born, giving them a sense of purpose and inclusion. Katie Carpenter, Dallas mom of two, suggests asking older siblings to bring a diaper for changing or a towel when bathing baby — "little gestures to include the older sibling [so they] feel loved and important."



Expect your older child to act out as he deals with the transition, especially if he has been an only child thus far, and always meet him with love. Remember that your child is used to being the only child and that it is natural for him to react in some way. Have empathy for your child and help him to process those new emotions. Never tell your child to not be jealous or angry or frustrated; those are all human and acceptable emotions. Rather, teach him how to experience such emotions in a healthy manner and let him know that you understand him, that you love him and that it is all OK.



Lastly, breathe, sleep when possible, take care of yourself so that you can take better care of your children and remember that you too are human. ●

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DIAPER BAGS & LUGGAGE TAGS

5 travel hacks for parents with baby in tow

Before her first birthday, Viola Knight had clocked eight transatlantic flights and acquired stamps from 10 different countries in her passport. Her mother Lauren, a travel guide and blogger at *aspiringkennedy.com*, can testify that traveling with babies takes a special type of patience. We asked the Dallas native and London resident to dish out her best advice on traveling with littles in tow. Using these tricks, or what we like to call “travel hacks,” you’ll be a one-handed, diaper-changing machine in no time.

1. KEEP IT LIGHT

Lauren insists that minimalism is key when it comes to packing. “You really don’t need half of the stuff you initially lay out,” she says. “Look at every item and consider leaving it behind. The most stressful travel moments we have had are when we have too much stuff. Things get broken, we pull a muscle trying to carry it all between platforms and

the mental tax of keeping tabs on everything isn’t worth it. You would be shocked with how little we carry, but it’s a lesson we’ve learned the hard way.”

2. PUSH BACK FEEDINGS

In order to time feedings with takeoff, Lauren suggests pushing them back in small increments

the day before flying. "Obviously, it's an imperfect science, but it typically works," she says. "Hopefully, your baby will be getting really hungry during the boarding. Do all your best tricks to hold them off until your plane is taxiing the runway." She advises scheduling another feeding for the plane's descent. "The harder part about this is that you may not have another feeding fall into this timeframe," she says. As a back up, Lauren keeps an empty bottle on hand to fill up with juice or water during the drink service.

3. KEEP CALM

While on the go, Lauren has noticed that stress plays a major role in her daughter's mood. "If I'm uptight, it makes my baby crazy," she says. "If I'm having a good time, she is. I try to be relaxed and it somehow soothes her. For new parents who are seasoned travelers, give yourself time. I know you are used to gliding through security and making short connections, but things with a baby are just different. Give yourself a bit of time for an unforeseen circumstance, and you'll be so thankful you did."

4. BEND THE RULES

Lauren admits to allowing her daughter special privileges while traveling, including endless snacks and iPad games. "My husband and I decided that since we are asking her to give above-average behavior, we can meet her halfway," she says. "We've tried to make travel something our daughter looks forward to. If she wants to stand up and play with the air conditioning vent, go for it. If she flips my armrest up endlessly, she can. As long as she is being sweet and not bothering other people, we let her do as she likes. It's not relaxing for us, since we are the ones buffering her energy from the rest of the plane. We never regret the time spent getting to our destination, even when the days seem endless."

5. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

As a new mom, Lauren was surprised at how condescending other travelers can be. "I suddenly felt like a second-class passenger bringing my baby on an airplane," she says. "People would roll their eyes when they were seated by us. I was totally oblivious to it before kids. On the flip side, the flight staff is so encouraging and helpful. I've had them offer, on countless occasions, to hold Viola if I needed to get up and use the restroom. Even if the day goes terrible, it's a small price to pay to end up somewhere great. I know it's hard to imagine on the front-end when the travel portion is all that's on your mind, but you actually will only remember the fun part in retrospect." ●

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LAUREN'S 9 MUST-HAVES

from page 6

Blue Bell All Natural Fruit Bars (Lime), \$3.59
Tom Thumb, Multiple locations
bluebell.com

Palmer's Cocoa Butter Formula Tummy Butter, \$8.99
Babies R Us, Multiple locations
palmers.com

CamelBak Water Bottle, \$20
Dick's Sporting Goods,
Multiple locations
camelbak.com

Germ-X Hand Sanitizer, \$2.99
Walgreens, Multiple locations
germx.com

Maxi Dresses, price varies
Francescas, Multiple locations
francescas.com
Target, Multiple locations
target.com

Preggie Pop Drops, \$5.50
Motherhood Maternity,
Multiple locations
threelollies.com

Secret Fit Belly Maternity Skirts, price varies
Motherhood Maternity,
Multiple locations
motherhood.com

What To Expect App, free
iTunes
apple.com/itunes

Young Living Peppermint Essential Oil, \$28.29
youngliving.com

WHITNEY'S 10 MUST-HAVES

from page 18

Noodle & Boo Super Soft Lotion, 16 oz., \$18
Nordstrom, Multiple locations
noodleandboo.com

HALO SleepSack Swaddle, \$14.99–\$21.99
Buy Buy Baby, Multiple locations
halosleep.com

Kickee Pants Pajamas, starting at \$32
Babybliss, Dallas, 469/232-9420
kickeepants.com

Brica Fold'n Go Travel Bassinet, \$39.99
Babies R Us, Multiple locations
munchkin.com

Ruby Love Baby Book, price varies
rubylovebaby.com

WubbaNub Pacifiers, \$15.95 each
Pickles & Ice Cream,
Multiple locations
wubbanub.com

Dapple Food-Grade Pacifier Wipes (set of 25), \$5.99
Buy Buy Baby, Multiple locations
dapplebaby.com

Birth Photography by f8studio, price varies
f8studio.com

Moby Wrap, price varies
Nappy Shoppe,
Plano, 469/371-5448
mobywrap.com

Ducks in a Row Personal Organization Service, price varies
ducksinarowpersonalorganizing.com

TANA'S 8 MUST-HAVES

from page 28

My Little Lamb Cradle 'n Swing, \$179.99
Babies R Us, Multiple locations
fisher-price.com

The Happiest Baby on the Block by Harvey Karp, M.D., \$15
Barnes & Noble, Multiple locations
happiestbaby.com

Aquaphor, price varies
Walgreens, Multiple locations
aquaphorhealing.com

Green Sprouts Burp Pads, \$12.99 for 5-pack
Buy Buy Baby, Multiple locations
ipplaybabywear.com

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child by Marc Weissbluth, M.D., \$16
Barnes & Noble, Multiple locations
drweissbluth.com

Letter Quiz app, \$1.99
iTunes
apple.com/itunes

Baby Tracker: Nursing, \$4.99
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apple.com/itunes

Aden & Anais Swaddlers, \$44 for 3-pack
Pickles & Ice Cream,
Dallas, 214/361-1898
Plano, 972/781-1898
adenandanaais.com

SOUTHWEST SOIREE

from page 14

B.E. Little You and Me Teepee, \$115–\$135
etsy.com/shop/belittleyouandme

Grit and Gold Event Planning, price varies
gritandgoldweddings.com

Hush Art Co. Custom Invitations, price varies
etsy.com/shop/hushartco

Peppermintandswish Arrow Muffin Picks, \$14.50 for 12-pack
etsy.com/shop/peppermintandswish

Rent My Dust Mismatched China Rentals, price varies
rentmydust.com

The Antipodean Project Stamped Kraft Bags, \$6.46 for 10-pack
etsy.com/shop/theantipodeanproject

We + You Floral Arrangements, price varies
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NEW MOM 2.0

Tackling motherhood the second time around

I still recall those days when I became a mom for the first time: Swine Flu wasn't even called H1N1 yet, and I kept my sweet baby girl indoors for weeks until my brother (aka seasoned parent) finally forced me to join the human race again. I couldn't help myself — better safe than sorry right? The hypochondriac in me was just the tip of the iceberg.

I had every gadget, gizmo and organic baby item stocked and ready to go. Visitors were greeted with a checklist of sorts to make sure they wouldn't infect my infant daughter with any kind of illness. And when it came to routine, I'd lose it whenever someone or something would deter me from feeding, bathing or putting down my little one at the precise time I had intended. Ah, good times ...

Now, five years later, I'm officially a mom of two and Gabbie is big sister to 5-month-old Gustavo. Though the second time around has its own share of crazy moments — try putting down a baby for a nap while your older child just has to give you her show-stopping rendition of *Frozen*'s "Let It Go" that very second — so far, I've been relishing motherhood a lot more this time around.

Why is this? Is it because my son sleeps through the night? No. He's been waking up every

two hours just like his sister did. Is he content being plopped into a swing or placed on a play mat, so I can actually do a load of laundry or finish writing an article? Actually, the little guy loves being carried — all the time.

I recently realized that it *wasn't* anything that baby G was doing, it was what I was or rather wasn't doing. I didn't freak out if he missed a nap. I didn't insist that our home be library-quiet when he was asleep. Nor did I have to presoak each onesie and sleep sack in Dreft every time. As for routine, it really does go out the window when you have two little ones on completely different schedules.

I have a timeframe that I try to adhere to, but nothing close to the mommy-meltdowns I would have when Gabs missed her feeding session by five minutes or something equally minor would occur. This time, instead of striving to be the perfect mom according

to William Sears, Richard Ferber or Elizabeth Pantley (don't know who these people are yet — trust me, you will), I'm trying to listen to my gut. If I want to pick up my crying baby from his crib, I will (and not feel guilty for "spoiling" him). At the same time, if I decide that I want to start bottle-feeding when Gustavo gets his first tooth, so be it.

It's amazing how trying to be a good mom by everyone else's standards sucks the life out of you. So many different philosophies, so many contrasting opinions — it was definitely enough to keep me up at night (that is, if I wasn't awake already). I still listen to other people's two cents, but in the end, I stick to what feels right for me. And so far, it's working out pretty well. I'm a lot calmer with baby No. 2 and, while it could just be his personality, he seems equally relaxed with me. It's probably a little bit of both.

Thankfully, Gabbie doesn't seem too traumatized by my manic bouts of childrearing she received during her baby days. And all that time I spent focusing on being the "right" kind of mom the first time around? I now spend my time enjoying just being one. To quote my daughter, I guess all I had to do was "Let It Go." ●

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