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Real  
World



# mamas

# KNOW

**THE REAL EXPERTS—28 MOMS  
FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY—  
SHARE THEIR BEST ADVICE ON  
EVERYTHING FROM MORNING  
SICKNESS TO POST-BABY SEX.**

# BEST

**W**hen I found out I was expecting my first child, my friend Leslie was about to give birth. “Are you ready?” I asked her. “Yes and no,” she said. “I have 21 onesies and footie things, so yes. But I have no idea how to raise a child, so no.”

It was the most honest answer I’d ever heard. None of us ever feels truly ready to become a mother, no matter how full the changing-table drawers, how tall the tower of reading material on our bedside table. So we turn to each other. It was Leslie who told me which nursing pads to buy, and Kadi who reassured me it was OK for my son to fall asleep at the breast, and another woman—whose name I don’t even remember—who explained in graphic detail what it feels like when your water breaks. I met her at a party about a week before my water broke—10 weeks early.

She probably saved my son’s life.

It’s the moms, the women on the frontline of pregnancy, who are the real experts. After her son was born, Leslie circulated a memo titled “What I Know Now” via e-mail.

Think of this piece as “What Lots of Smart Moms (Including Me and Assorted Experts Who Are Also Moms) Know Now.” In a few months, you’ll be able to add some tips of your own and pass it on.

BY KATE NEALE COOPER

## “SPLURGE ON ONE GREAT PAIR OF MATERNITY JEANS. THEY’LL DO WONDERS FOR YOUR WARDROBE AND YOUR SELF-ESTEEM.”

— KATE NEALE COOPER

“I HAD A LOT of expectations about the first time I’d see my baby on the sonogram, and I felt really guilty that I didn’t feel more connected to this fuzzy image. But I am fantastically bonded with my baby now that she’s here. You have to realize that there is no one way you’re supposed to feel about this whole darn thing.” — HEATHER HACH, LOS ANGELES, MOTHER OF ONE

“IF YOU’RE A FIRST-TIME MOTHER, add 10 days to your estimated due date to get a more correct date.” — GAIL J. DAHL, AUTHOR OF *PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH SECRETS* (INNOVATIVE PUBLISHING, 2007) AND MOTHER OF ONE

“AT MY FIRST ULTRASOUND, I was told I was having a girl. Being a planner, I loaded my registry with pink gingham and monogrammed pillows for ‘Hannah.’ Imagine my surprise when Hannah was born with a banana! Remember to keep your expectations in check, save your receipts and don’t wash all the clothes before the baby is born.”

— MARCY PRYOR, KINNELON, N.J., MOTHER OF TWO

“GINGER-FLAVORED ALTOIDS made my morning sickness disappear for hours. Ginger tea, ginger ale, fresh ginger—didn’t help at all. The Altoids are hard to find but well worth the hunt.” (Editor’s note: Find them at amazon.com and altoids.com.) — SWATI VIRMANI, PHILADELPHIA, MOTHER OF ONE

“IF YOU END UP ON BED REST, arrange a visit from a physical therapist who can teach you safe exercises to do in bed so your muscles and bones don’t get weak. This will help you emotionally as well as physically.” — K.N.C.

“AFTER I HAD MY SECOND MISCARRIAGE, I made a choice. I would not feel jealous or angry; I would not feel self-pity when I saw pregnant women, or new babies in strollers. I would instead pretend to be happy for them; I predicted

**click!** For links to full-length articles on many of the topics touched on in this story, such as relieving morning sickness, surviving bed rest, making labor easier and taking care of your baby, go to [fitpregnancy.com](http://fitpregnancy.com).

that real happiness would follow. It was an experiment that did me a lot of good. It made me feel proactive—I learned not to wait for the third miscarriage before seeking help, like many doctors and health plans advise you to. And after many doctors and tests, lots of blood drawn, and seeing many friends have their babies, I finally had mine.”

— VIOLET DELUNA, LOS ANGELES, MOTHER OF ONE

“CALL YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY to find out exactly what is and is not covered for your delivery. For instance, your insurance may not cover a private room, so requesting one might cost extra. Knowing what to expect upfront will save you the stress of unexpected bills later.” — K.N.C.

“BUY THE NEXT SIZE maternity workout pants, swimsuits, sports bras and athletic shoes before you need them. You can’t predict the day you can no longer stuff yourself into your workout clothes, and by the time you get around to

## “IF YOU ARE CRINGING ABOUT YOUR DIFFERENT, THICKER BODY, YOUR PARTNER MAY TAKE YOUR LEAD AND SHARE YOUR DISCOMFORT. FOCUSING ON THE POSITIVES (AND HUMOR) OF YOUR CHANGING BODY WILL HELP YOU EXUDE A POWERFUL VIBE.”

— CINDY PIERCE, CO-AUTHOR OF *FINDING THE DOORBELL: SEXUAL SATISFACTION FOR THE LONG HALE* (NOMAD PRESS, 2008) AND MOTHER OF THREE

buying bigger ones (if you ever do), you’ll have missed a week or two of exercise.” — SUZANNE SCHLOSBERG, BEND, ORE., MOTHER OF TWO

“IF YOU EXPERIENCE PREMATURE CONTRACTIONS, lie on your left side and drink at least a glass or two of water. If this makes them stop, you are experiencing ‘false’ labor. If it doesn’t, call your doctor.” — GAIL J. DAHL

“PREGNANCY BRINGS OUT THE PERFECTIONIST in many women. They set unrealistically high expectations for diet, exercise, weight gain and delivery. They engage in black-

**"CHANGE DIAPERS BEFORE FEEDING,** as you would never want to interrupt your baby's postprandial sleep for that."

—REBECCA CHANDLER, LONDON, ENGLAND, MOTHER OF TWO

**"YOU'LL GET LOTS OF PASS-ALONG BABY GEAR** from friends and family—things that aren't exactly gifts. To avoid uncomfortable situations later, ask up front whether or not your benefactor wants the gear back."

—HILLARI DOWDLE, KNOXVILLE, TENN., MOTHER OF ONE

**"IF YOUR BABY IS IN THE NICU,** ask the nurses what you can do to be involved with his care. They may let you change his diapers, feed him, sponge-bathe him and more."

—MARIANNE GAMBOA, SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MICH., MOTHER OF TWO

**"DON'T DEPRIVE YOURSELF** of even more sleep than necessary by changing a wet diaper in the middle of the night. Use lots of diaper ointment at bedtime and then only change the poopy ones."

—HEATHER HACH

**"EVERYONE SAYS TO NAP** when your newborn naps, but that's just not realistic for most people. Instead, my husband and I took turns in the evenings: One of us would go to bed right after dinner, while the other was on baby duty until the wee hours of the morning. That way we were tired on alternate days."

—HEATHER LUSK, INDIANAPOLIS, MOTHER OF ONE

**"IF YOU HAVE TO GIVE THE BABY** just a snort or two of formula to get you both through the first couple of feedings, just do it. This is a marathon, not a sprint. It is much better for you and baby to be rested and fed than for you to be exhausted with extremely sore nipples."

—SUSY GREER, WASHINGTON, D.C., MOTHER OF TWO

**"DON'T COUNT ON HAVING PLEASURABLE SEX** six weeks after you give birth. Apparently, there is a direct correlation between the number, type and frequency of utensils used during delivery and the degree of sexual discomfort afterward."

—LESLIE HOUSMAN

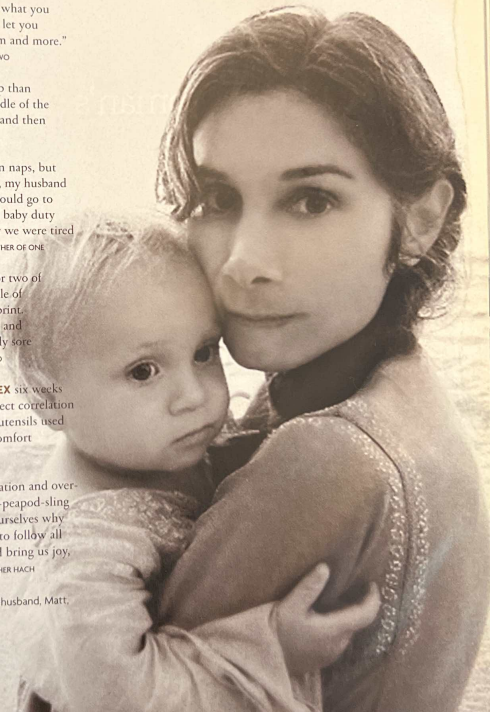
**"WHEN WE'RE DROWNING** in a sea of information and overwhelmed by the you-must-have-this-organic-peapod-sling parenting culture, it's important to remind ourselves why we had children in the first place. It was not to follow all the rules. It was because we thought it would bring us joy, and we hoped to bring them joy, too."

—HEATHER HACH

**Kate Neale Cooper** lives in Richmond, Va., with her husband, Matt, and their children, Ned, 7; Virginia, 5; and Gilbert, 1.

**“PICK UP A COPY OF NINTENDO'S 'BRAIN AGE' AND PLAY IT WHILE YOU PUMP. THIS REALLY HELPED ME SNAP OUT OF MY POSTPARTUM MOMMY FOG AND GET MY MENTAL POWER GOING AGAIN.”**

—HILLARI DOWDLE



**“DURING LABOR, CHANGE POSITIONS EVERY 20–30 MINUTES. ONCE YOU GET COMFORTABLE, THE BABY GETS COMFORTABLE. YOU WANT THE BABY OUT, NOT COMFORTABLE. IT ALSO HELPS TO SHIFT YOUR PELVIS, ALLOWING THE BABY ROOM TO MOVE THROUGH THE BIRTH CANAL.”**

—MAURA VARLEY-TWYMAN, RICHMOND, VA., MOTHER OF FOUR

**“REALIZE THAT IT'S VERY, VERY RARE** for birth to go as planned, without a hitch. I'm convinced this is to prepare you for raising children, a job for which the most valued skills by far are flexibility and adaptability.” —SUSY GREER,

WASHINGTON, D.C., MOTHER OF TWO

**“WRITE DOWN THE NAMES** of doctors and nurses at each shift change. It's so much easier to get someone's attention when you speak to them by name.” —KNC

**“UNLESS THERE IS A MEDICAL REASON,** do not succumb to a premature induction. A naive and excited first-time mom can be easily tempted to be induced, but it is not worth the potential problems. I had a complicated C-section recovery after my OB induced me because I was 'close enough.'”

—BECKY BOGGAN, ATLANTA, MOTHER OF FOUR

**“WHEN IT IS TIME TO PUSH,** be sure you are not lying flat on your back. If you do, gravity will be working against you and may delay your baby's birth. If you are having back labor and are told your baby is 'posterior' or not facing the right way, push while lying on alternate sides to help the baby rotate into the best position.” —BONNIE BERK, R.N., FOUNDER OF MOTHERWELL (MOTHERWELLFITNESS.COM) AND MOTHER OF THREE

**“BEFORE YOU GO HOME** and get very busy taking care of your baby, write a thank-you note to your OB or midwife and the nurses. You'll always be glad you expressed your gratitude.” —MARY ELLEN STROTE, CALABASAS, CALIF., MOTHER OF TWO

### chime in

Have any great pregnancy, delivery or postpartum tips you'd like to share? Send them to us at fit.pregnancy.com/chimein.

**“THE FIRST TIME WE DID THE DEED** after I had a baby, my boobs sprayed milk at the most inopportune moments. For a while after that, I wore a bra for bedroom romps, so I wouldn't have to be distracted by whatever the girls were doing.” —GAIL O'CONNOR, NEW YORK, MOTHER OF TWO

**“AS SOON AS YOU CAN,** go buy a couple of outfits that fit. You will look and feel better, which makes it much easier to accept your right-now body.” —NICOLE UNICE, RICHMOND, VA., MOTHER OF THREE


**“IN CHINESE MEDICINE,** it is said that how a woman treats herself in the first four weeks after giving birth will affect her health for the rest of her life. Because of this, many women are encouraged to stay home with the baby and not go out. This might be nearly impossible in our culture, but I think the best thing you can do is have a 'sitting in' or 'sleeping in' time with your baby for as long as you can. It's great for bonding too.” —LIZ RICHARDS, PORTLAND, ORE., MOTHER OF TWO

**“INVOLVE YOUR HUSBAND A LOT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. IT WILL BE BETTER FOR ALL THREE OF YOU. DON'T UNDERMINE HIS CONFIDENCE BY SECOND-GUESSING OR CRITICIZING HIS ATTEMPTS. UNLESS HE COULD ACTUALLY KILL THE BABY DOING IT HIS WAY, LET HIM DO IT HIS WAY.”**

—LESLIE HOUSMAN, BIRMINGHAM, ALA., MOTHER OF THREE

**“NURSING A BABY** is like marrying a man. You have to be fully committed from the start because there will be too many reasons not to continue.” —LESLIE HOUSMAN

**“SOME PEOPLE LEARN THIS THE HARD WAY:** Your baby may not automatically be added to your medical policy. Have your husband call the insurance company as soon as the baby arrives.” —KNC



**“TO CUT DOWN ON THE EXCUSES NOT TO EXERCISE, SCHEDULE A REGULAR WORKOUT WITH A FRIEND WHO IS NOT PREGNANT (READ: NOT AS TIRED AND APT TO WIMP OUT AS YOU).”**

SUZANNE SCHROEDER

and-white thinking and tend to believe that anything short of perfect is a failure. Set realistic goals and realize you don't have to do everything perfectly to have a healthy baby.” — ALICE D. DOMAR, PH.D., AUTHOR OF *BE HAPPY WITHOUT BEING PERFECT* (CROWN, 2008) AND MOTHER OF TWO

“APPLY LANSINOH CREAM to your nipples every day for a month before giving birth. Although it's marketed for the treatment of sore nipples, it's very effective at preventing them.” — ERIN ZAMOFF, WASHINGTON, D.C., MOTHER OF THREE

“IF SEEING THE NUMBERS ON THE SCALE escalate at each prenatal visit is going to stress you out, don't look. Ask that the nurse only speak about your weight gain if it's too much or too little.” — KNC

“TAKE A ‘BABYMOON’: A vacation with your partner before the baby arrives is a wonderful way to stay connected and focus on one another.” — NURSE-PRACTITIONER BARBARA DEHN, AUTHOR OF *YOUR PERSONAL GUIDE TO PREGNANCY* (BLUE ORCHID PRESS, 2004) AND MOTHER OF ONE

“INTERVIEW BABYSITTERS before you even have a baby. Finding the time when you're a new mom will be tough, and you don't want to choose someone out of desperation.” — CARRIE STIDWELL O'BOYLE, MADISON, WIS., MOTHER OF ONE

“HAVE YOUR HUSBAND INVESTIGATE his paternity leave options. My husband found out he was entitled to a paid six-week leave. Having an extra pair of hands with twins was essential.” — SARAH MACDONALD, NEWARK, DEL., MOTHER OF TWO

“END-OF-PREGNANCY SLEEPLESSNESS? Consider creating your own 'sleep number' bed using a semi-inflated air mattress.” — SANDY JONES, CO-AUTHOR WITH HER DAUGHTER, MARCIE JONES, OF *GREAT EXPECTATIONS: YOUR ALL-IN-ONE RESOURCE FOR PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH* (STERLING, 2004)