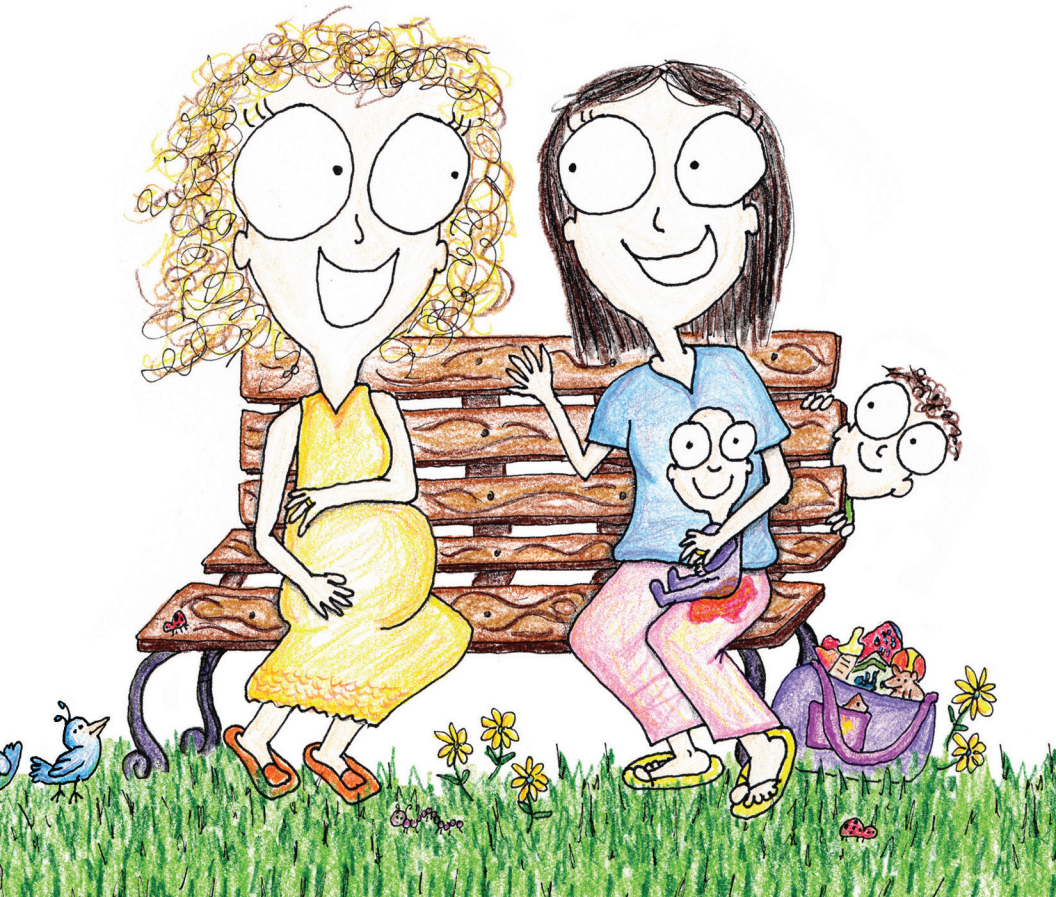




Secrets *of The* Mommyhood

Everything I wish someone had told me
about pregnancy, childbirth and having a baby

By Heather Alexander



SPRIGGS MERRIWETHER

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*To all the moms in my life,
especially Paula Drake,
whose pregnancy inspired this book.*

*And to Molly and Charlie,
who taught me what it is to be a mom.*

Before I had kids, I thought if I read a million pregnancy and parenting books, I would be prepared for everything motherhood could throw at me.

WRONG! Once I had kids, I often found myself with a bubble over my head that read, “Why in the world didn’t someone tell me THAT?”

A couple of years later, I was invited to a baby shower for a friend and wanted to include a funny note about things that were coming her way – some advice based on my Mommyhood experience. I kept it to ten things. But my mind was swimming with so many more that I realized there were far more experiences to share.

I went to sleep. My five-and-a-half month-old woke up just before 5:00 a.m. and, after feeding him, my mind began to race with all the things I was failing to tell my friend. Thus, the idea for this book was born.

Secrets of the Mommyhood is a light-hearted, real and practical perspective on what really happens in the trenches of motherhood. Those other books don’t talk nearly enough about poop, vomit and what’s on TV at 3:00 a.m.!

I have a son and daughter and have been a working mom and a stay-at-home mom. Do I have motherhood all figured out? Absolutely not, but I can share with you a few insights about what might happen and, hopefully, make you laugh about it.

I am originally from Tennessee, but I also have lived in Atlanta, Georgia, and Washington, D.C., where I worked as a desk jockey for UPS. And for a few months at Christmastime, I even drove a UPS delivery truck in the Metro D.C. area to “learn the business.” Yes, I was chased by dogs, but even being chased by dogs couldn’t prepare

me for what happened when I became a mom. So, here it is: the book I wish I had read before I had kids. I hope it helps you anticipate – with humor – some of the things that are coming your way.

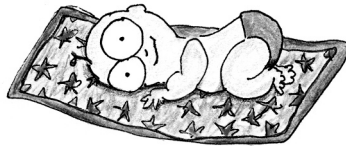
Welcome to the Mommyhood!

Heather

A Quick Disclaimer

I am not a doctor (medical or Ph.D.). Almost everything in this book is based on personal experience. These are things about becoming a mom I learned along the way that I find funny, interesting or helpful. Advice given is not intended to replace the opinion of your personal physician or your child's pediatrician or your own best judgment.

Additionally, as of this writing, I am not affiliated in any way with individuals or companies who make products mentioned in this book.



CHAPTER ONE

The Original List That Started It All



Ten Things No One Told Me Before I Had a Baby

- 1 You can never** have enough pacifiers. Put more than one in each car, in your purse, etc. Somehow you never have one when you need it. And at some point, you will find the nearest grocery store and in desperation give your child one that hasn't been sterilized. This brings me to #2:
- 2 Don't judge** other parents; it may be you one day. I remember having opinions about some harried mother with her ketchup-smothered child and thinking I would never be out and about with a ragamuffin. Been there. Same goes for a frustrated parent at the store who says something to their child that you find appalling. Been there, too.
- 3 You will obsess** about your newborn's pee and poop. You and your husband will have entire conversations about its smell, consistency and regularity (or lack thereof) like it's the weather.
- 4 Projectile vomit** and explosive poop is rare but real. If you leave the house without a change of clothes for your baby, you are actually throwing down a poop gauntlet.
- 5 The surest way** to make your child pee, poop or spit up is to give them a bath.

- 6 The second surest way** to make your child pee, poop or spit up is to take them to a photography session. I recommend a decoy outfit.
- 7 Newborn babies** chortle and make many different noises when they sleep. It's really hard for you to fall asleep when they are making those noises. Then when things are too quiet, you also can't sleep. Your new mommy eyes become catlike and you can almost see in the dark as you check to make sure your baby's chest is going up and down.
- 8 Total strangers** will touch your baby's face and worse – their hands. Those hands go right in the mouth. You also will look at other people's kids and see microscopic germs swirling around them like an aura. In crowded spaces, I recommend putting a blanket over the carrier or closing it up so people won't be tempted to touch your baby.
- 9 Passing around a baby** that has just been fed is like shaking up a can of soda and then opening it. Most new parents learn this lesson the hard way.
- 10 When you are pregnant** and hands-free, everyone will hold the door open for you. When you are pushing a stroller and could really use some help with the door, it won't occur to anyone (except another mom) to help you.



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CHAPTER TWO

Expectantly Expecting



The Bump Watch

This time it's you. Not your friend, not your cousin, not so-and-so from work...YOU are pregnant. Congratulations! Pregnancy is all kinds of wonderful and strange and exciting and scary. For the most part, I really loved being pregnant. I'm not saying there weren't moments, because there were definitely moments. But my attitude toward pregnancy was a positive one, and I always looked for the humor in whatever was happening. I think that helped me enjoy my pregnancies, especially when I came across something that caught me off guard, which happened quite a bit.

Sometimes, those off-guard moments happen even before you're pregnant. If you are married, people start asking when you are having a baby even before you've sent thank-you notes for your wedding gifts. And they seem to have no idea that what they are asking is: 1) rude, and 2) none of their business.

When my husband and I first got married, I was peppered with this question repeatedly by a neighbor. We lived in a condominium where the exterior front doors faced one another in a courtyard, and her door was directly across from ours.

This lady was well-intentioned, but we were more acquaintances than friends, so she wasn't exactly someone with whom I would discuss my uterus.

One time she even said in her scratchy voice that made me wonder if she might secretly be the witch from Hansel and Gretel, "Oh, is that a little bump there I see on your belly?" To which I replied, "No, lady, that's a FOOD baby, but thanks for making me feel fat by asking if I am pregnant when I'm not!"

Okay, so I didn't say that, but I wish I had. The truth is I was stunned into silence and just muttered, "Uh, no," and scurried away.

Later, when I actually *was* pregnant, we went to great lengths to hide it from her. When we bought our crib, we had to carry this huge, cumbersome box down the outdoor stairs to our front door.

When we got near her door, we laughed and started the power-shuffle to cram it in the door before she could see the big “CRIB” letters on it.

Okay, enough about us. You should know there is a little pre-bump fat phase.

When you are starting to show, people will suspect you are pregnant, but won't want to ask you about it directly. So you will notice folks looking at you and wondering if you are expecting or just eating a few too many snack cakes. I got this question a lot in the cafeteria at work — I guess because I was not hidden away in my cubicle.

The fat phase question goes like this, “*Sooooo... what's new?*”

Then it's up to you if you decide to spill the beans or keep them guessing by reaching for a donut and saying, “Noth'n.”

When you are pregnant, you want to tell people when *you* want them to know, not when they ask. Which brings us to...

Telling People

When you find out you are pregnant, you pretty much want to run from the pee stick to the nearest phone, but consider keeping it to yourself (and your spouse) for a day. It's one of the best secrets you will ever know. Plus, it gives you time to evaluate, if you haven't already, whom you want to tell and when you want to tell them.

If you can, I recommend waiting twelve weeks before you tell people — just to make sure everything is okay. Personally, I didn't want to have to share bad news after good if things didn't go well.

Fortunately, everything was fine, but I am still glad I waited to tell the masses.

What?! You mean I can't tell anybody?! Well, I didn't say that. Just don't tell your extended friends and family at first.

I was about to burst with the news so I told a girl at work and then mostly complete strangers or people I didn't know very well, like a cab driver and a girl I sat next to at a banquet. As it turns out, the girl at the banquet was newly pregnant, too. We ended up

becoming friends and visited each other in the hospital when we had our babies. We are still friends today.

Mommyhood will connect you to others in ways you never expected.

For our first pregnancy, we made a video to tell my husband's side of the family. It was a recap of something fun that happened at Christmas. And at the end, we had a page that said "Coming Soon — a Bert and Heather Re-Production..." and then the ultrasound picture.

The next Christmas, my sister and her husband wanted to play us something they had recorded from the radio. But that was just a ruse, as it turned out to be the heartbeat of my nephew-to-be.

I found out about my second pregnancy when my husband was away on a business trip. It was killing me to wait, but I didn't want to tell him over the phone. It was almost his birthday, so I bought some prenatal vitamins and put them in a box. Our daughter and I made cupcakes and gave him the wrapped gift when he got home. So, there are lots of creative ways to tell your significant other or loved ones that you are expecting.

If you are working, you also need to think about when to tell your employer. I told mine at twelve weeks after we let our friends and family know. Your employer needs to know so they can plan for your maternity leave (or departure if you're not coming back). And you will have doctor's appointments to work into your schedule. You'll also want to consult with your boss or human resources department about benefits and paperwork that needs to be completed. If you're planning to breastfeed, ask if there's an existing lactation room where you can breast pump when you return to work. If there's not, perhaps you can solicit help in getting one set up; all you need is a door you can lock, a comfy chair, and a small fridge (though a sink is also quite handy).

Speaking of telling people at work — you just never know if the folks around you are struggling with pregnancy. For example, I was at work when I felt the first kick and said something to the person next to me in the copy room. He was totally silent and then hinted to me that he and his wife had just lost a baby.

Oy! That's when I realized I had to be careful when talking

about my pregnancy. Not that I didn't have every right to be over the moon at the first flutter or anything else pregnancy-related. I was, but after that, I paid more attention to how I handled the good news with people I saw every day at work.

This is true of other people in your life as well. You might find that you and your friends all started to get married around the same time. And then come the babies. But there's usually someone in the bunch that can't conceive when or how she wants.

So, be happy, but be aware of others. People will react to your news in different ways.

And one last thing to note about telling people you are expecting: This kind of news travels quickly. Be aware that the people you tell are probably going to tell other people — even if you tell them not to.

A Word of Advice About Advice

Well, since we have covered how you tell the good news and how folks receive it, let's talk about the dumb things people say when they find out you are pregnant.

Complete strangers will offer you and your spouse unsolicited baby-having, child-rearing advice right along with the change for your cheeseburger. This advice runs the gamut from useless to completely wrong. Not that it is always without merit, but how the little old lady at the grocery store used to do things is not necessarily how things are done today.

One of the most common things people ask you when they learn you are expecting is whether or not you plan to nurse your baby. And in many cases, it doesn't even matter what you say to the person — they are just waiting for their turn to talk so they can give you unsolicited advice or commentary about breastfeeding.

Honestly, it's hard enough to navigate uncharted territory without random idiots giving you their two cents, but that's just how it goes.

And, I should tell you up front that unsolicited advice and being judged by other parents is just a part of being a mom. It happens

all the time in everyday life — from how you handle parenting situations to whether or not you nurse to what choices you make for childbirth.

But here's the deal — what you do is your business. **You do not need to discuss, explain or defend your decisions.**

I know when you're expecting there's a lot to wrap your mind around, and you don't know what you're supposed to think about things, and you're excited, so you're going to want to talk about it.

Tips

- ★ *Look for common-sense moms to talk with about your pregnancy.*
- ★ *If someone has cornered you and is pummeling you with nonsense, just interrupt them to excuse yourself to go to the restroom. You're pregnant so you can get away with that.*

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