

## To-Do List

- Yoga
- Massage
- Vacation
- Nursery



# Have More Fun Before Baby Arrives

Aside from growing a tiny human, you're probably spending these nine months busier than ever. *AB* investigates what you're up to.

**WHEN I WAS** expecting my first child, the only thing that calmed the chaos swirling inside my head was to go into nesting mode, which meant stocking up on the essentials: toothpaste, bottled water, batteries (the kind that power a baby swing). So in between doctor's appointments,

childbirth classes, and trying to set up a Pinterest-worthy nursery, I dutifully raided the drugstore aisles, buying enough shampoo to outlast what remained of my husband's hair.

"Pregnant women today are aware that their life is about to change forever, so they want to make sure

they get 'enough stuff in' before they have a baby," says Jill Lewis, a psychotherapist in New York City. Whether a mom-to-be accomplishes this by shopping for household supplies or garnering "experiences" such as concerts and vacations doesn't matter. "It's about regaining

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by LIZ KRIEGER • photographs by THAYER ALLYSON GOWDY

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A pre-baby vacay may be just what the doc ordered!

control,” says Lewis. You might not be able to do anything about your rapidly changing body, but you *can* savor your hours of sleep or book a dream vacation. So what are you waiting for? Find out how other moms-to-be are spending their nine months, and get inspired.

### ➤ Organize Your Plans

Many women approach impending motherhood the same way they handled their wedding. “They’re used to having a checklist,” says Becca Amirault, a midwife with St. Luke’s Women’s Center, in San Francisco.

For *AB* reader Danielle Morgan Cooley, of Topeka, Kansas, that meant hand-painting the nursery with a mural from the Disney movie

*The Lion King*. “It took 22 hours, and I had seriously swollen ankles.”

Ann Ostrowski, a mother of four from Lexington, Massachusetts, recalls moving into a new home just seven weeks before her daughter was born. In that short period of time, she says, “I had the kitchen renovated, got the lights replaced, and put up curtains.”

Several women told us that they finally set aside time to organize their wedding photos into albums (perhaps for future offspring to enjoy?). “There’s a desire to make

sure the first ‘half’ of your life is documented,” says Amirault, and that includes pregnancy. “Maternity photo shoots, belly casts, and selfies of your bump are all common parts of pregnancy today that weren’t happening a decade ago.”

Tackling these tasks can be stressful, especially if things don’t go as planned. When Betsy McNab, from Alameda, California, was expecting her first child, she focused on finding a cute rug for the nursery. “I spent hours combing websites before finally settling on one,” she says. “Ah, the time I used to have! And then when the rug’s delivery was delayed, I remember crying. I thought it had to be there on time.”

Whatever projects you choose, set aside time for the ones that will make life easier postbaby. “During pregnancy, I tried saving money for the inevitable uptick in takeout dinners I knew we’d depend on once our newborn arrived, and I also hired a cleaning person to help keep our home tidy amid the new-baby chaos,” says Jhoanna Wade, a mom of three from New York City.

### ➤ Fill Your Calendar

In anticipation of the hectic days ahead, today’s couples try to cram in special experiences that will be harder to do once Baby arrives.

“I wanted to go anywhere and everywhere because I had this sense that I’d never really travel again,” says Rachel Levin, a writer and mother in San Francisco. “The summer I was pregnant we went to Paris and the south of France. It was great but also slightly torturous considering I couldn’t enjoy any of the soft cheeses and wine! But I did get to skip the long bathroom line at the Louvre,” Levin adds.

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Photo shoots and selfies of your bump are common now, but they weren’t a decade ago.

# YOU

## BALANCE

Remember that a night out for you and your partner will soon involve arranging (and paying) for a sitter, so take advantage of favorite events now. "We saw a lot of Broadway shows before we had our first child," says Kate Carpenter, a mother in Pelham, New York. "We were living in Manhattan at the time and realized that being able to see a show on a whim was going to end with our daughter's arrival. I was nearly full-term, so the seats were uncomfortable, but we saw great theater in those last few weeks."

Of course, manicures, pedicures, and prenatal massages have been indulgences for many pregnant women for a while. So get some pampering in before your schedule revolves around Baby. "I really tried to enjoy my yoga classes, go hiking, and get a massage, knowing that they would be in short supply with a little one in tow," says Sally Wadyka, a mother in Boulder, Colorado.

Some moms-to-be try to stockpile sleep. Three weeks before her second child was born, Cara Harmon, of Montclair, New Jersey, spent the night in a hotel room to enjoy undisturbed rest. "There I was, in New York City at this hipster boutique hotel, and in for the night at 9 P.M. It was heaven," she says.

### ► Examine Your Life

Before welcoming a little person to your world, it's only natural to start thinking about what kind of parent you want to be. What qualities from your childhood do you want to pass on to your baby? How can you create a safe and happy life for your family?

That may mean working through some unresolved issues with parents or siblings. "I notice that during pregnancy more women evaluate the relationships they have with family members—especially with their mothers," says Amirault. "This is a time for repairing those bonds and tending to old wounds." In some

cases, it's small things, like a patient who deeply lamented the fact that her mother never read to her as a child, says Amirault. "I've also had patients who were estranged from their parents decide to take steps to heal that rift."

You may start to look at your lifestyle as a whole, to think of inconveniences or dangers you might never have previously noticed, says Florencia Greer Polite, M.D., an attending ob-gyn at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, in New Orleans. "Before our first child was born, my husband was adamant that we had to move because our loft apartment wasn't a safe arrangement for me or our baby," says Dr. Polite. "He actually experimented trying to walk down our stairs using his briefcase as a fake belly. He tripped each time."

For *AB* reader Jordan Godwin, of Wilmington, North Carolina, it was all about the money. "My goal was to pay off my credit card debt so I wouldn't have that burden going into maternity leave. I cut back and used a little extra from my paycheck and took a big chunk of our tax returns for the rest. Because of that, I wasn't nearly as stressed about money."

It can definitely be a time of "big buys." Lauren Goldberg, a mother of two in Brooklyn, New York, decided to upgrade to a new TV for all the upcoming nights at home. A last gasp of pricey shopping can also hit. Nicole Kindred, a mother of one from Long Island City, New York, splurged on a plush mattress for her bed and some nicer pieces of furniture. "We figured it would be harder to rationalize such large purchases after we'd welcomed our baby," she says.

However you decide to spend your 40 weeks—bookshelf building or binge-watching, stockpiling or snoozing—one thing is for sure: At the finish line will be a tiny but oh-so-sweet reward. **AB**

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