

what to expect when you re expecting a baby

What to Expect When You're Expecting a Baby: A Comprehensive Guide

what to expect when you re expecting a baby is a question that many parents-to-be ask as they embark on one of the most transformative journeys of their lives. Pregnancy is a unique experience filled with excitement, anticipation, and a fair share of surprises. From the early stages of conception to the final moments before delivery, understanding the physical, emotional, and practical changes that occur can help ease anxiety and prepare you for the road ahead. This guide will walk you through the key aspects of pregnancy, offering insights and tips that cover everything from prenatal care to emotional well-being and nursery preparation.

The Early Signs and First Trimester Experiences

The moment you find out you're expecting, your world begins to shift. The first trimester, generally the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, is often the most intense and uncertain period.

Recognizing Early Pregnancy Symptoms

Many women notice subtle changes early on, such as missed periods, nausea, fatigue, and heightened sense of smell. These symptoms are caused by hormonal fluctuations, particularly the increase in human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) and progesterone. Morning sickness, despite its name, can strike at any time of day and may last throughout the first trimester.

What Prenatal Care Looks Like Initially

Scheduling your first prenatal appointment is a crucial step. During this visit, your healthcare provider will confirm the pregnancy, estimate your due date, and discuss lifestyle changes. Blood tests and ultrasounds may be ordered to assess your health and the baby's development. Early prenatal vitamins rich in folic acid are essential to support fetal growth and help prevent neural tube defects.

Physical and Emotional Changes During the Second Trimester

Often referred to as the "honeymoon phase" of pregnancy, the second trimester (weeks 13 to 26) tends to bring relief from early symptoms and a boost in energy levels. However, it also introduces new changes.

Body Changes and Baby Bump Development

As your uterus expands, you'll likely notice a visible baby bump. Many women experience skin changes, such as the "pregnancy glow," stretch marks, or a dark line called the linea nigra running down the abdomen. It's normal to have some backaches or mild swelling in the feet as your body adjusts to carrying extra weight.

Emotional Rollercoaster and Mental Health

Pregnancy hormones don't just affect your body; they can also influence your mood. While many women feel a sense of calm and happiness, others might experience anxiety or mood swings. Talking openly with your partner, friends, or a counselor can be beneficial. Joining prenatal classes or support groups can also provide reassurance and community.

Important Screenings and Tests

The second trimester is when you'll undergo crucial screenings such as the anatomy scan ultrasound, typically around 18 to 22 weeks, which checks the baby's growth and development. Additional tests like glucose screening for gestational diabetes and blood tests for genetic conditions might also be recommended depending on your health history.

Preparing for the Final Stretch: Third Trimester Insights

The last trimester, from week 27 until birth, is when the baby grows rapidly, and you start to feel the full impact of pregnancy.

Common Physical Discomforts

As your belly grows larger, you may experience increased pressure on your bladder, making frequent trips to the restroom common. Heartburn, leg cramps, and difficulty sleeping can also become more pronounced. Gentle exercise, such as walking or prenatal yoga, can help ease some discomforts and improve circulation.

Getting Ready for Labor and Delivery

This is the perfect time to attend childbirth education classes to learn about labor stages, pain management options, and what to expect in the delivery room. Creating a birth plan can help communicate your preferences to your healthcare team, but staying flexible is equally important as labor can be unpredictable.

Final Health Monitoring

Regular prenatal visits become more frequent in the third trimester to monitor the baby's position and growth. Your doctor or midwife may check for signs of preeclampsia or other complications. Learning to recognize early labor signs, such as regular contractions or water breaking, is essential.

Embracing the Emotional Journey of Expecting a Baby

Pregnancy is not just a physical transformation; it's a profound emotional experience filled with hopes, fears, and dreams.

Bonding with Your Baby Before Birth

Many expectant parents find ways to connect with their unborn child by talking, singing, or gently rubbing their belly. Ultrasound images provide a tangible glimpse of your baby, making the experience feel even more real.

Preparing for Parenthood Together

Whether you're a single parent or sharing this journey with a partner, open communication about expectations, fears, and responsibilities is key. Parenting classes, reading books, and watching expert videos can build confidence and reduce anxiety about life after birth.

Practical Steps to Take When You're Expecting

Aside from managing the physical and emotional, there are practical preparations every family should consider.

Setting Up the Nursery

Creating a safe, comfortable space for your baby is exciting and rewarding. Consider essentials like a crib, changing table, and storage for clothes and diapers. Many parents find it helpful to assemble furniture and wash baby clothes well before the due date to avoid last-minute stress.

Financial Planning and Maternity Leave

Pregnancy often brings new financial considerations. Budgeting for medical bills, baby supplies, and potential loss of income during maternity or paternity leave is important. Checking with your

employer about leave policies and government benefits can help you plan accordingly.

Choosing a Pediatrician

Research and interview potential pediatricians early on. Knowing who will care for your baby after birth provides peace of mind and ensures a smooth transition to postnatal care.

Health and Lifestyle Tips for a Smooth Pregnancy

Taking care of yourself during pregnancy is vital for both you and your baby.

- **Nutrition:** Focus on a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. Avoid alcohol, limit caffeine, and stay hydrated.
- **Exercise:** Engage in moderate physical activity approved by your healthcare provider to maintain strength and reduce stress.
- **Rest:** Prioritize sleep and listen to your body's signals. Short naps can be rejuvenating.
- **Avoid Harmful Substances:** Steer clear of tobacco, recreational drugs, and certain medications that may harm fetal development.
- **Stress Management:** Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or prenatal massage.

Pregnancy is a time of profound change, learning, and growth. By understanding what to expect when you're expecting a baby, you can navigate this journey with greater confidence and joy, embracing the adventure that leads to welcoming a new life into the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the common early signs of pregnancy?

Common early signs of pregnancy include missed periods, nausea or morning sickness, fatigue, tender or swollen breasts, frequent urination, and mood swings.

How will my body change during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, your body will undergo various changes such as weight gain, breast enlargement, skin changes like stretch marks, increased blood volume, and hormonal shifts that may affect your mood and energy levels.

What prenatal care should I expect?

Prenatal care typically includes regular check-ups with your healthcare provider, routine ultrasounds, blood tests, nutritional guidance, and monitoring of the baby's growth and your health to ensure a safe pregnancy.

How can I manage common pregnancy symptoms?

Managing symptoms like nausea can involve eating small, frequent meals, staying hydrated, resting when tired, and avoiding triggers. Always consult your doctor before taking any medication or supplements.

What lifestyle changes should I consider when expecting a baby?

Expectant mothers should focus on a balanced diet, regular moderate exercise, avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and certain medications, getting adequate rest, and reducing stress to promote a healthy pregnancy.

What should I prepare for labor and delivery?

Preparing for labor includes attending childbirth education classes, creating a birth plan, packing a hospital bag, discussing pain management options with your doctor, and understanding the signs of labor to know when to go to the hospital.

Additional Resources

What to Expect When You're Expecting a Baby: A Professional Overview

what to expect when you re expecting a baby is a question that arises for many individuals embarking on the transformative journey of pregnancy. This life-changing event encompasses a complex interplay of emotional, physical, and psychological changes that shape the experience for expectant parents. Understanding what to anticipate can alleviate anxiety and prepare families for the multifaceted realities of pregnancy, childbirth, and early parenthood.

Pregnancy is a dynamic physiological process lasting approximately 40 weeks, during which a fertilized egg develops into a full-term baby. The anticipation surrounding this period is often accompanied by uncertainty and curiosity about symptoms, medical care, and lifestyle adjustments. This article delves into the essential aspects of pregnancy, reviewing key stages, common experiences, and practical considerations to offer a comprehensive understanding of what to expect when you're expecting a baby.

Physical Changes and Symptoms During Pregnancy

From the earliest weeks of pregnancy, the body undergoes significant hormonal fluctuations that trigger a variety of physical symptoms. These changes can vary widely between individuals, but

certain patterns are commonly observed.

First Trimester: Early Adjustments

The initial 12 weeks mark a critical phase where the embryo implants and begins rapid growth. Many women experience nausea, commonly referred to as morning sickness, which affects approximately 70-80% of pregnant individuals. Fatigue and breast tenderness are also prevalent, resulting from elevated levels of progesterone and estrogen. Additionally, mood swings may arise due to hormonal imbalances, impacting emotional wellbeing.

Second Trimester: The “Golden Period”

Between weeks 13 and 26, many report a relative easing of early symptoms. The second trimester is often characterized by increased energy and diminished nausea. Physical signs such as a growing abdomen, fetal movements, and changes in skin pigmentation become more noticeable. However, some may encounter new discomforts, including back pain and leg cramps, as the body adapts to supporting the growing fetus.

Third Trimester: Preparing for Birth

The final trimester presents intensified physical demands. The weight gain and uterine expansion contribute to shortness of breath, heartburn, and frequent urination. Braxton Hicks contractions, or “practice contractions,” may begin, helping the uterus prepare for labor. Sleep disturbances become common due to physical discomfort and anxiety about impending labor.

Emotional and Psychological Considerations

Pregnancy is not only a physical journey but also a profound emotional experience. What to expect when you’re expecting a baby includes navigating complex feelings ranging from excitement to apprehension.

The Impact of Hormonal Changes

Hormones such as estrogen and progesterone influence neurotransmitter activity in the brain, often resulting in mood fluctuations. It is important to recognize that feelings of anxiety, irritability, or sadness during pregnancy may be normal, but persistent or severe symptoms warrant professional support.

Social and Relationship Dynamics

Expecting a baby often reshapes interpersonal relationships. Partners, family members, and friends may respond differently to the news, requiring adjustment and communication. For many couples, pregnancy introduces new challenges and opportunities for bonding, but it can also intensify stressors related to finances, roles, and future planning.

Medical Care and Prenatal Testing

A significant aspect of what to expect when you're expecting a baby involves regular medical monitoring to ensure the health of both mother and child.

Routine Prenatal Visits

Standard care includes scheduled appointments with an obstetrician or midwife, typically every four weeks during the first 28 weeks, increasing in frequency thereafter. These visits encompass weight checks, blood pressure measurement, fetal heartbeat monitoring, and urine tests to detect potential complications such as gestational diabetes or preeclampsia.

Screening and Diagnostic Tests

Prenatal screening options have expanded in recent decades, providing valuable information about fetal development. Common tests include:

- Ultrasound scans to assess anatomical development and estimate gestational age
- Blood tests to screen for chromosomal abnormalities such as Down syndrome
- Glucose tolerance tests to detect gestational diabetes
- Group B Streptococcus screening in the third trimester

The choice and timing of these tests are tailored to individual risk factors and preferences, underscoring the importance of informed decision-making in prenatal care.

Lifestyle Adjustments and Nutritional Needs

Adapting daily habits is a crucial component of navigating pregnancy successfully.

Dietary Recommendations

Nutritional intake during pregnancy directly affects fetal growth and maternal health. Healthcare providers typically recommend a balanced diet rich in folic acid, iron, calcium, and protein. Folic acid supplementation is particularly emphasized to reduce the risk of neural tube defects. Additionally, pregnant individuals are advised to avoid certain foods, such as unpasteurized cheeses, raw seafood, and high-mercury fish, to prevent infections and toxic exposures.

Physical Activity and Rest

Maintaining moderate physical activity, such as walking or prenatal yoga, is generally encouraged to enhance circulation and reduce pregnancy-related discomforts. However, high-impact or contact sports are discouraged. Equally important is ensuring adequate rest, as fatigue can be pronounced, especially in early and late pregnancy stages.

Preparing for Labor and Delivery

Understanding childbirth options and preparing mentally and physically for labor is an essential part of what to expect when you're expecting a baby.

Types of Delivery

Expectant parents may consider various delivery methods, including vaginal birth, cesarean section, or assisted delivery with instruments like forceps. Each method carries distinct benefits and risks:

- **Vaginal birth:** Typically associated with shorter recovery times and fewer complications but may involve perineal trauma.
- **Cesarean section:** Planned or emergency surgery that can be lifesaving but involves longer hospitalization and potential surgical risks.
- **Assisted delivery:** Utilized when labor stalls or fetal distress occurs, but may increase risk of injury.

Discussing birth plans with healthcare providers can help clarify expectations and preferences.

Signs of Labor and When to Seek Help

Recognizing early labor signs — such as regular contractions, water breaking, and vaginal bleeding — is vital. Medical advice typically recommends contacting a healthcare provider when contractions

become frequent and painful or if there are concerns about fetal movements.

Postpartum Considerations

While the primary focus remains on pregnancy and delivery, anticipating the postpartum period is equally important.

Physical Recovery

After birth, the body undergoes significant healing, including uterine contraction to pre-pregnancy size and hormonal adjustments. Common postpartum symptoms include bleeding, soreness, and fatigue.

Mental Health Awareness

Postpartum depression and anxiety can affect up to 1 in 7 new mothers, highlighting the necessity for vigilance and access to mental health resources. Support networks and professional counseling play critical roles in recovery and adjustment.

In summary, what to expect when you're expecting a baby involves an intricate blend of physiological transformations, emotional shifts, and practical preparations. By gaining a realistic understanding of these elements, expectant parents can navigate pregnancy with greater confidence and resilience, setting the foundation for a healthy transition into parenthood.

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what to expect when you re expecting a baby: *What to Expect When You're Expecting 5th Edition* Heidi Murkoff, 2016-06-02 With 18.5 million copies in print, What to Expect When You're Expecting is read by 93% of women who read a pregnancy book and was named one of the 'Most Influential Books of the Last 25 Years' by USA Today. This cover-to-cover (including the cover!) new edition is filled with must-have information, advice, insight, and tips for a new generation of parents. With What to Expect's trademark warmth, empathy, and humour, it answers every conceivable question expectant parents could have, including dozens of new ones based on the ever-changing pregnancy and birthing practices and choices they face. Advice for partners is fully integrated throughout the book. All medical coverage is completely updated, including the latest on prenatal screening and the safety of medications during pregnancy, as well as a brand-new section on postpartum birth control. Current lifestyle trends are incorporated, too: juice bars, raw diets, e-cigarettes, push presents, baby bump posting, the lowdown on omega-3 fatty acids, grass-fed and organic, health food fads, and GMOs. Plus expanded coverage of IVF pregnancy, multiple pregnancies, breastfeeding while pregnant, water and home births, and cesarean trends (including VBACs and 'gentle cesareans').

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: What to Expect When You're Expecting

4th Edition Heidi Murkoff, Sharon Mazel, 2010-02-18 We're expecting again! Announcing the COMPLETELY REVISED AND UPDATED FOURTH EDITION of this bestselling pregnancy book. This is a cover-to-cover, chapter-by-chapter, line-by-line revision and update. It's a new book for a new generation of expectant mums, featuring a fresh perspective and a friendlier-than-ever voice. Heidi Murkoff has rewritten every section of the book, answering dozens of new questions and including loads of new asked-for material, such as a detailed week-by-week foetal development section in each of the monthly chapters, an expanded chapter on pre-conception, and a brand new one on carrying multiples. The Fourth Edition incorporates the most recent developments in obstetrics and addresses the most current lifestyle trends (from tattooing and belly piercing to Botox and aromatherapy). There's more than ever on pregnancy matters practical (including an expanded section on workplace concerns), physical (with more symptoms, more solutions), emotional (advice on riding the mood roller coaster), nutritional (from low-carb to vegan, from junk food-dependent to caffeine-addicted), and sexual (what's hot and what's not in pregnant lovemaking), as well as much more support for that very important partner in parenting, the dad-to-be. Overflowing with tips, helpful hints and humour (a pregnant woman's best friend), this new edition is more accessible and easier to use than ever before. It's everything parents-to-be have come to expect from What to Expect...only better.

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: *What to Expect When You're Expecting* Heidi Murkoff, Sharon Mazel, 2008-04-10 Announcing a brand new, cover-to-cover revision of America's pregnancy bible. What to Expect When You're Expecting is a perennial New York Times bestseller and one of USA Today's 25 most influential books of the past 25 years. It's read by more than 90% of pregnant women who read a pregnancy book—the most iconic, must-have book for parents-to-be, with over 14.5 million copies in print. Now comes the Fourth Edition, a new book for a new generation of expectant moms—featuring a new look, a fresh perspective, and a friendlier-than-ever voice. It's filled with the most up-to-date information reflecting not only what's new in pregnancy, but what's relevant to pregnant women. Heidi Murkoff has rewritten every section of the book, answering dozens of new questions and including loads of new asked-for material, such as a detailed week-by-week fetal development section in each of the monthly chapters, an expanded chapter on pre-conception, and a brand new one on carrying multiples. More comprehensive, reassuring, and empathetic than ever, the Fourth Edition incorporates the most recent developments in obstetrics and addresses the most current lifestyle trends (from tattooing and belly piercing to Botox and aromatherapy). There's more than ever on pregnancy matters practical (including an expanded section on workplace concerns), physical (with more symptoms, more solutions), emotional (more advice on riding the mood roller coaster), nutritional (from low-carb to vegan, from junk food-dependent to caffeine-addicted), and sexual (what's hot and what's not in pregnant lovemaking), as well as much more support for that very important partner in parenting, the dad-to-be. Overflowing with tips, helpful hints, and humor (a pregnant woman's best friend), this new edition is more accessible and easier to use than ever before. It's everything parents-to-be have come to expect from What to Expect...only better?.

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: *What to Expect Before You're Expecting* Heidi Murkoff, 2009-05-15 Announcing the prequel. From Heidi Murkoff, author of America's bestselling pregnancy and parenting books, comes the must-have guide every expectant couple needs before they even conceive—the first step in What to Expect: What to Expect Before You're Expecting. An estimated 11 million couples in the U.S. are currently trying to conceive, and medical groups now recommend that all hopeful parents plan for baby-making at least three months before they begin trying. And who better to guide wanna-be moms and dads step-by-step through the preconception (and conception) process than Heidi Murkoff? It's all here. Everything couples need to know before sperm and egg meet up. Packed with the same kind of reassuring, empathetic, and practical information and advice and tips that readers have come to expect from What to Expect, only sooner. Which baby-friendly foods to order up (say yes to yams) and which fertility-busters to avoid (see you later, saturated fat); lifestyle adjustments that you'll want to make (cut back on

cocktails and caffeine) and those you can probably skip (that switch to boxers). How to pinpoint ovulation, time lovemaking, keep on-demand sex sexy, and separate conception fact (it takes the average couple up to 12 months to make a baby) from myth (position matters). Plus, when to seek help and the latest on fertility treatments—from Clomid and IVF to surrogacy and more. Complete with a fill-in fertility journal to keep track of the babymaking adventure and special tips throughout for hopeful dads. Next step? What to Expect When You're Expecting, of course.

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what to expect when you re expecting a baby: What to Expect When You're Expecting (the Worst) AJ Moses, 2012-10 Pregnancy is one of the greatest times in life Anxious anticipation is the theme of this exhilarating period, as Mommy and Daddy eagerly await their bundle of joy and become closer than ever in the process. Well, at least that's how planned kids work.49%% of pregnancies in the US are unplanned...or accidental, in less polite company. Mommy usually gets over this--after all, she is the one who has to actually go through with it--but what about Daddy?Expecting (the Worst) is a self-help book guiding the reader through the experience of an unplanned pregnancy from an underexamined perspective: that of the wishes-he-wasn't-expectant father.It discusses methods of coping with a very stressful time--and woman--from a candid, comical viewpoint in the hopes that 35,000 words later, all three involved will live happily ever after (those first 6 weeks post-birth.Publisher:

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: What to Expect: Eating Well When You're Expecting Heidi Murkoff, 2010-07-15 EATING WELL WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING provides mums-to-be with a realistic approach to navigating healthily and deliciously through the nine months of pregnancy - at home, in the office, at Christmas, in restaurants. Thorough chapters are devoted to nutrition, weight gain, food safety, the postpartum diet, and how to eat when trying to conceive again. And the book comes with 150 contemporary, tasty, and healthy recipes that feed mum and baby well, take little time to prepare, and are gentle on queasy tummies. At the heart of the book are hundreds of pressing questions every mother-to-be has: Is it true I shouldn't eat any food cooked with alcohol? Will the caffeine in coffee cross into my baby's bloodstream? I'm entering my second trimester, and I'm losing weight, not gaining - help! Is all sushi off limits? How do I get enough calcium if I'm lactose intolerant? I keep dreaming about a hot fudge sundae - can I indulge? (The answer is yes!)

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again. And the book comes with 150 contemporary, tasty and healthy recipes that feed mum and baby well, take little time to prepare and are gentle on queasy tummies. At the heart of the book are hundreds of pressing questions every mother-to-be has: Is it true I shouldn't eat any food cooked with alcohol? Will the caffeine in coffee cross into my baby's bloodstream? I'm entering my second trimester, and I'm losing weight, not gaining - help! Is all sushi off limits? How do I get enough calcium if I'm lactose intolerant? I keep dreaming about a hot fudge sundae - can I indulge? (The answer is yes!)

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what to expect when you re expecting a baby: Everything Else You Need to Know When You're Expecting Paula Spencer, 2025-08-22 Can you ask your friends to do your baby's laundry? When should you tell your boss you're pregnant? How do you let your mother-in-law know that you're not naming the baby after her? And what if your water breaks in public? Everything Else You Need to Know When You're Expecting is the complete guide to the old and new customs, traditions and etiquette for expectant and new parents, and those who love them. After years of both professional and first-hand experience, Paula Spencer has compiled the answers to those questions every woman asks herself as soon as she knows she's expecting. Topics include Pregnancy at Work, Handling Busybodies, and Tricky issues (such as the all-too-common anxiety about starting labor in a crowd--or an elevator). There are also detailed explorations of such classic concerns as Naming, birth announcements and shower gifts.

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what to expect when you re expecting a baby: What to Do When You're Having Two Natalie Diaz, 2013-12-03 Revised and updated in 2020 The creator of Twiniversity delivers an essential update to her must-have manual to having twins, now with expanded info on twin pregnancy and tandem breastfeeding, and advice on the best gear to help save your sanity. With almost two times as many sets of twins today as there were forty years ago, What to Do When You're Having Two has quickly become the definitive resource for expectant and new parents of multiples. A mom of fraternal twins and a world-renowned expert on parenting multiples, author Natalie Diaz launched Twiniversity, the world's leading global resource for twin parenting information and support online. Now, with her expanded edition of What to Do, she includes new information on breastfeeding, gear, sleep, and having two when you already have one, as well as: • creating your twin birth plan, • maintaining a realistic sleep schedule, • managing tandem breastfeeding, • stocking up on what you'll need (and knowing what high-tech products are now available and what's a waste of money), and • building a special bond with each of your twins. Accessible, informative,

and humorous, *What to Do When You're Having Two* is the must-have manual for every parent of twins.

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what to expect when you re expecting a baby: *What to Expect when You're Expecting* Arlene Eisenberg, Heidi Eisenberg Murkoff, Sandee Eisenberg Hathaway, 1984 Incorporating the most recent developments in medicine, and responding to the many queries and letters received from readers, this cover-to-cover revision and update of the popular book provides accurate and reader-friendly information. Copyright © Libri GmbH. All rights reserved.

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: A Guide to What to Expect When You're Expecting a Baby Dr Felicia Ruiz, 2024-01-21 'A Guide to What to Expect When You're Expecting a Baby' is a thorough guide that will walk you through the amazing experience of pregnancy and motherhood. It provides insightful information and useful tips to help you be ready for your baby's arrival. We'll go over the essential steps in getting ready for pregnancy, the ins and outs of the first trimester, and adopting a healthy lifestyle to support the growth of your unborn child and your own health in the early chapters. As you begin your life-changing journey, dive into subjects like maternity attire, making your house cozy, and developing a close relationship with your partner. As the course goes on, we go deeper into the nuances of pregnancy, covering everything from making a birth plan to choosing necessary baby equipment. Acquire knowledge about typical obstacles and strategies to overcome them, relish the last trimester, and confront the thrill and doubts of labor and delivery with assurance. Essential newborn care instructions are covered along with equally crucial topics like postpartum care and adjustment. Learn about the benefits and drawbacks of being a parent, as well as how to keep your relationship intact during this life-changing experience. With 'Anticipating Parenthood, ' we hope to provide you with information, inspiration, and support so you feel prepared and equipped to welcome your little one into the world.

what to expect when you re expecting a baby: Life As A Lie Rebecca Perere , 2013-10-29 The year is 1650. This romantic adventure begins in Spain and continues with a long voyage to the Highlands of Scotland. Flora Gastelum, a smart, talented and very strong-willed woman lives in Barcelona. At one time, her life was very comfortable, but then the lies meant to protect her ripple to the surface. Jose, an evil uncle, confesses that he murdered her beloved father and a near rape forces her into a life and culture she never dreamed of. Flora is faced with a bleak choice: Stay in Spain living with greed, certain unhappiness and possible death, or take the risk of a new life, continued adventure, and a future unknown. Jose's son had hoped to marry Flora, but now all he hopes for is revenge, and has vowed to track her to the ends of the earth if need be. Believing her mother to be shallow and unfaithful, as well as fearing for her own life, she leaves her ancestral home with Moray MacLeod, who offers her freedom by taking her to his castle in the Highlands of Scotland. Moray MacLeod, Laird of Clan MacLeod, is a Highlander known for his power and rugged good looks. A strong and virtuous man, he possesses a tender heart when it comes to the people he loves. Bound by honor and intrigue from a promise his dead father made, he hurls himself into danger that threatens his life and the life of the woman he has fallen deeply in love with. Their voyage to Scotland takes them to a small trading port called Vigo. A storm nearly sinks their boat and forces them to dock in need of replenishing supplies. To their surprise, they find Antonio, a six-year-old child who has been missing from Spain. Flora and many others in Barcelona had been near desperate to find him, but after months of searching all hope was lost. Bruised, beaten and badly scarred from a whip, the child finds allies who are willing to care and protect him. An entire clan of fearless warriors bond with Antonio, each man finding a place in their hearts for an orphan child. Flora and Moray find happiness neither one expected, but will the dangers, lies and evil in Spain follow her to Scotland, threatening to destroy the life and country she's grown to love?

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