Preparing Yourself For Motherhood

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Getting Ready for Motherhood

Introduction 3

Chapter 1 – Your New life 5

Chapter 2 – Getting Your Home Ready 9

Chapter 3 – How to Stop Sibling Rivalry 12

Chapter 4 – What to think about before going to the hospital 15

Conclusion 19

Introduction

Welcome to the most crazy and amazing time that you will ever experience in your life. There is so much that you have to look forward to right now….knowing that you have created a new life, the understanding that your life is going to take a whole new direction, and of course the wonderful feeling that your family is finally complete.

But there is no doubt a lot that you are nervous about right now too. And that's okay, you wouldn't be human if you weren't nervous about bringing another life into the world.

And there is so much about having a baby that nothing will ever really prepare you for. It doesn't matter how many television shows you watch, people you get advice from, or books that you read, nothing can really prepare you for that moment when your child is in your arms and in your life.

There is no doubt a lot of information coming at you right now. Everyone has an opinion on the best bottles to use, what diapers to buy, even whether or not you should be breastfeeding. You know that people are just trying to help you, but in reality all of that advice can get a little overwhelming.

After all, this is your experience with your baby. Your experience is going to be different from everyone else's, because it's yours and yours alone. The things that worked with your neighbor's baby might not work for yours. Just like the baby soap that your coworkers used on their newborns is not necessarily the soap that will be best for your baby.

Hopefully this guide will give you some quick and easy advice that will help you to find your own way through some of those tough pregnancy decisions. If nothing else, this guide was designed to point you in the right direction so that you will be able to make the decisions about your baby that are right for both you and your baby.

Remember, this is your experience and no one else's. Your journey is special and unique. It is hard when you feel like everyone is giving you different advice on what you should be doing to get your life ready for a new baby.

Just keep in mind that you are the parents. Whatever you decide to do or not to do is perfectly okay. Your style of parenting is going to be unique to you.

And your baby wouldn't have it any other way.

Chapter 1 – Your New life

You know that your life has already been experiencing huge changes since you found out that you were pregnant. And those changes are not going to end anytime soon. The weeks and months that lead up to your delivery are going to continue to bring major changes to your daily life and routine.

Bringing a new life into this world is a beautiful and life changing experience – literally.

This is why you should start thinking about your life now and what areas of your life are likely going to change. Make a list of some of the things that need to be done before your little bundle of joy arrives. These can be things like:

- Putting a nursery together
- Changes in your sleep schedule
- Making room for a baby swing
- Handling all of your baby clothes
- Having a good day care worker that you can afford
- Etc.

The sooner you start preparing for these things, the easier the transition into parenthood will be for you.

Preparing for Changes in Your Marriage

A baby adds a very complex and unique dynamic to your marriage. It's complex because your partner and best friend is likely the person that you rarely see anymore. It's not that there is not love there, of course there is, after all that's how you got this beautiful baby in the first place.

But once your baby arrives, both you and your spouse will likely have your own 'jobs' to keep the house running smoothly. This is especially true in the beginning when your newborn goes through multiple diapers, outfits, and feedings in one day.

When your baby gets here, don't be surprised if one of you is in the kitchen washing bottles while the other one is changing the baby in the nursery.

And of course, once your baby gets here your relationship with your spouse will become very unique in the sense that your spouse is now truly your family. No amount of time, distance, or even arguments is ever going to change the fact that your spouse is the only other parent your child has. It is a real sense of bonding and family that can't be compared to anything else.

Your baby is going to make you love your spouse more deeply than you ever thought possible. But many parents also tend to get so busy caring for their new baby that they forget to connect with each other.

Right now, in those last few months before the baby gets here, make the decision to start spending alone time with your spouse as much as possible. Even if is just a nice talk on the back porch at sunset it will be more than enough for both you and your partner to stay connected with each other.

It is also a good idea to start going on small dates as soon as the baby's mother feels up to it. This doesn't have to be long, even a simple walk in the park while someone is at home with the baby will give you both time to reconnect with one another.

Openly Talk To Each Other

Parents love to talk about what their life is going to be like once their baby gets here. Many times mom and dad will discuss what their baby might look like, who they will take after, or what it will feel like to hold their precious baby in their arms for the first time.

Too many times parents don't think about the hard parts of having a baby until the baby actually arrives.

There are so many great things about having a new baby in your life, but there will also be a lot of work. Don't wait until you bring your baby home from the hospital before you start thinking about how the responsibilities of your new baby will be handled. Waiting to make some of these decisions could result in major disagreements during what is supposed to be one of the happiest times in your lives.

When you and your spouse are together, start to make a list of different things that you will be doing when the baby gets here. Ask each other questions like:

- Will the father be in the birthing room?
- Will the dad be staying at the hospital?
- Who should pack the electronics for the hospital?
- If the mother wants to stay home from work longer, can your family finances handle it?
- What should the nighttime schedule be? (who should get up with the baby during each nighttime feeding?)
- Who will be responsible for getting the baby ready for daycare and who will be responsible for picking the baby up?
- Etc.

These are just a few questions to get you started, but you get the idea. You want to be sure that you make as many decisions as you can now because once your little one arrives, you will likely be too busy to think about these things and you are more likely to fight over these decisions rather than talk them out.

Preparing for Changes in Your Work Schedule

One of the biggest things that you and your spouse need to prepare for before your little one arrives is the changes that will occur in your work schedules. Yes, as a mom you should legally have time off once your little one arrives. But what about all of those

doctor's appointments and sonograms that you will be having before the baby actually arrives?

Do you have enough personal time to cover these things?

Because you are the mother you shouldn't have too many problems getting off of work, but you do still need to plan ahead.

For instance, have you thought about these factors?

- Will you be breastfeeding when the baby gets here?
- Will your daycare's operating hours 'fit' with your work schedule or will you need to request a change in your work schedule?
- Do you have extra time off in case you want to take a few extra days at the end of your maternity leave?

Remember, there are all sorts of unforeseen things that can happen when a new baby comes, it is important that you are prepared for them.

What About Dad?

Your baby's father is going to want to share in as much of the pregnancy as he possibly can. He will likely want to go to all of the sonogram appointments and most of the doctor's appointments leading up to the birth.

But what about the actual hospital stay? What if you get put on bed rest? What about that first week or two after the baby gets home from the hospital?

Your husband is likely going to want to be involved in all of these things, but unlike you it might be harder for him to actually get off of work for these important days. Make sure that both of you are planning for any unexpected time that you might need off of work.

After all, every baby that you have is a once in a lifetime experience.

Chapter 2 – Getting Your Home Ready

You know that there is a lot that is going to change in your home before your little one arrives. It is very possible that you have already mapped out where you want your nursery to be, what it might look like, and even what theme you want for your newborn furniture.

And all of those things are very important and necessary things for you to think about. After all, you do want your house to be ready for your new arrival and getting everything ready will only add to the wonderful excitement that comes with knowing that there will be a new baby in your life.

But let's be honest, everyone knows that you should have a nursery ready. Many mothers plan the theme of their unborn baby's room well before they actually even get pregnant.

What about everything else though? What about the choices you will need to make in diapers and formula? What about washing your baby's clothes and storing them? What about all of those other things that are involved in bringing a new baby home that no one talks about?

Here are just a few things to think about:

Your Baby's Clothes

One of the most exciting things about having a baby is having a baby shower. This is when you will be getting all of those precious little baby clothes. Those adorable little outfits that you cannot help but envision your tiny baby wearing. And you know that baby clothes are something that you will have no shortage of, everyone loves buying

baby clothes and almost every gift you get for your little one will include something that they can wear.

A good rule of thumb is to ask the person who will be throwing your baby shower to put a kind note in the invitations that will gently remind your guests of the seasons that your baby will need clothes for at certain months.

If you ask them for a type of baby clothes for a certain timeframe in your baby's first year, your guests will not be offended because they will feel like you simply need a certain kind of item during a certain timeframe.

On the other hand, if you specifically ask for them to refrain from getting certain outfits for your baby, your shower guests might feel offended. Remember, many of them have had baby's of their own so they believe that they know what they are doing☺

Alternately, if you are tight on budget, you can always ask around for hand-me-downs from your friends or relatives. After all, your bundle of joy would quickly outgrow their clothes in the first years of their lives.

It's Always Okay To Have More Than One Brand

If this is your second child, you probably know just about all you need to know about what you like and what you don't like when it comes to your baby.

You probably know which diapers work best for your family and which formula you have had the best luck with.

But if you are a first time parent, then it is always a good idea to keep different brands of an item on hand – at least for the first week or so.

Make no mistake, the same diapers that the rest of your friends swear by could be the diapers that give your baby a rash. The same bottles that your family highly recommends could leak for you. And of course the same baby lotion that all of your most trusted girlfriends use might be nothing but greasy goo to you.

Every baby is going to be different, and your baby is no exception. When you first bring your little one home from the hospital you don't know yet what will work for your baby and what will not.

Once you discover which brand of a diaper, lotion, etc. that you like then you can start buying only that brand. But in the meantime, when you have all of those different brands of diapers on hand that you got from your baby shower, try keeping at least two brands of diapers on hand. This way if you really hate one brand, you have another one on hand to try.

Gift Cards

Asking for gift cards is a great way to get the things that you want. Once you bring your little one home from the hospital you will soon discover that it seems like whenever you really need something, you are out of it. Gift cards are also a great way to make sure that you always have the funds for any unexpected items that you realize you need when you get home from the hospital.

What Kind Of Baby Products Do You Want?

There is almost nothing more sensitive than a newborn's skin. You just never know what your baby might have a reaction to and what they will be okay with.

Many new parents look for lines of baby products that are specifically made for sensitive skin. And this is a safe bet. After all, if your baby doesn't have sensitive skin then you putting a sensitive skin product on them is not going to hurt them.

But if your baby does have sensitive skin then you can really do a number on your precious newborn if you put a non sensitive product on them.

There are a whole array of vegan and organic baby products that you have access to today - things that your parents did not have access to when you were born.

If you are looking to 'go green' with your baby's products, then it is a good idea to start looking at things now. You will want to do your research here. Find products that you are interested in, and read both the positive AND the negative reviews on them.

Chapter 3 – How to Stop Sibling Rivalry

Just like this is an amazing and scary time for you, it is also an amazing and scary time for your other child. Obviously, the thought of being a big brother or a big sister is a pretty neat thing. The thought of having a new baby who will look up to your older child is extremely cool.

But the thought of losing the spot as the baby of the family is a very intimidating thing. After all, your child has been your baby for their entire life. They don't know anything else, of course it is going to be scary for them to have a new baby come into their home and upset their current lifestyle.

You can prepare your child for the new baby from the time you conceive to the time you go into labor, but just like with you and your spouse, nothing can truly prepare your child for the changes that will happen once the baby actually comes home.

Here are some easy ways to help your child become excited about being a big brother or a big sister:

Make Your Older Child Feel Involved

The more that you can make your child feel like they are a part of the decision making process, the more important they will feel. This could be anything from helping you to

decorate the nursery to allowing them to pick out either the baby's first or middle name. The point is that your child feels involved and somewhat in control of all of these changes instead of feeling like they have no say in anything that is happening in their lives.

For instance, let's say that you are decorating the nursery. Why not let your child help you pick out a nursery theme? Maybe your child can even get the newborn a special gift that will be kept in the nursery or they can come to the store when you register for baby items and they can pick out some items to register for the new baby.

No matter what they decide though, remember to really listen to them and to agree to as many of their suggestions as you can. If you don't agree to anything, you will make them feel like they are not being heard and this can lead to your child becoming frustrated because they know that you aren't really asking them to be involved in the decision making process.

Have special 'big brother ' or 'big sister' gifts

Whenever anyone drops by a gift for your new baby's impending arrival, or when guests arrive with gifts after you bring your baby home from the hospital, consider asking them to bring a 'big brother' or 'big sister' gift as well.

Does this mean that you might get less for the new baby? Sure it does. Most people go shopping based on what they are able to spend and not who needs what. For instance, most people go shopping with the thought of "I have $50 to spend", not "the new baby needs this and this and that and I will get this for the little Jackson since he is a new big brother".

But really, it is well worth it to get less for the baby if it means that your other child will feel secure and special as well. Besides, you have already been through the experience of having a newborn. You likely have a good idea of the things that you will need.

For your child on the other hand, this is the first baby they have ever had so taking every opportunity to make being an older sibling seem like a good thing is very important.

Have a special rewards system

Once your newborn gets home from the hospital is usually when the sibling rivalry starts. After all, this is when your older child will go through the "big and permanent change" that you have been trying to prepare them for.

This is also the time when people will be coming in from out of town and every conversation will involve talk about the new baby.

Not to mention this is the time when your older child is going to need both you and their dad the most but both of you will be extremely busy taking care of a newborn.

Just like everything else, this is the time when you really need to think about making your older child feel as involved as possible. One great way to do this is to set up a 'rewards chart'. Every time your older child does something nice for the new baby or every time your older child helps you take care of the new baby, they can get a star on their chart.

At the end of each week, give them a special reward for getting a certain number of stars. This will help them to be excited about doing things with the new baby rather than feeling jealous and left out.

Always Have Special Time

Your special time with your older child should not be their reward for getting enough starts on their chart. That is only going to make them feel like your love for them is tied with their ability to love the new baby. No matter how hard it is for your older child to deal with the new baby, no matter how much they act out, make sure that you set aside some special time for them every day.

During the week when things are their busiest, each parent can take an hour of alone time with each child. So dad can be bathing the new baby while mom is reading a book to the older child. And then mom can rock the newborn to sleep while dad is playing a board game with the older child. This is an easy way for your older child to get some much needed one on one time with both parents every day.

Then one day every other weekend, or once a week if that is doable, have a sitter watch your newborn while you spend a couple of hours doing an activity that your older child wants to do. This can be roller skating, a trip to the park, or even a movie. What is important is that it is something your older child wants to do and not something that you want to do that you are just bringing your older child along for.

What about Fluffy?

Your dog or cat is also going to be going through some major changes when you have a new baby. Make sure that they feel included in everything as well. Little things like allowing them to investigate the nursery or giving them extra walks, cuddles, and playtime will go a long way in reassuring them that they are still a part of the 'pack' and that the new baby is a good thing and not a threat to them.

Chapter 4 – What to think about before going to the hospital

Figuring out what you need to know before your hospital stay is one of the most stressful things about your entire pregnancy. If you bring too much, then you will be overloaded with things and you might not be able to fit it all in your hospital room.

On the other hand, this is a once in a lifetime experience, if you bring too little you might forget something and not be able to experience your birth the way that you had envisioned.

And believe it or not, there are several decisions *other* than packing that you have to make that no one makes you aware of.

What Will You Allow and Not Allow Doctors to Do?

So much happens to you and your newborn when you give birth, and much of it happens at a super fast rate. Decisions that are made during labor and decisions that are made immediately after the baby is born all happen very quickly, and if you are not prepared to make these decisions you could easily wind up making a choice that you regret later.

For instance, what tests will the doctors do to your baby immediately after birth? And are you comfortable with those tests?

What about the controversial ointment that they will be putting into your baby's eyes? Do you want to refuse them or allow them?

If you are trying to have your baby naturally, is there any pain level where you would be willing to take an epidural? Or even other medications to help dull the labor pain?

These are things that you and your husband should be talking about now. As long as you and your husband are both on the same page about the kind of delivery that you want to have, he will be able to be an advocate for you when your labor is the most painful and you are not able to vocalize what it is that you want.

But the decisions that will happen during labor are only some of the questions you should be asking yourself.

Where do You Want Your Baby to Sleep At the Hospital?

So many new mothers fantasize about having their baby in the hospital room with them. After all, you have been waiting nine months to see your little bundle of joy, the thought of being separated from them so soon is hard.

Most of the time, it is easy to stick with your decision to have the baby sleep in the hospital room with you. This is especially true if the father is going to be staying over with you since he will be able to help care for the baby in the middle of the night.

But just like with pregnancy, labor can always take an unexpected turn. Maybe you had a head cold before your labor started and after the birth you felt particularly exhausted. Maybe something unexpected happened during labor and you are in more pain after the birth than you thought you would be. Or maybe you just had your child in the middle of the night and it is hard for you to keep your eyes open.

Every new mother wants her precious newborn to be with her, you are not alone in that. But you should really consider what might make you decide that it is best for the baby to stay in the nursery.

Trying to make a decision like that after you have just given birth is going to be extremely hard because of all of the changes your body would have just been through.

What Will You Be Packing?

The great packing dilemma, it is something that every pregnant person goes through. Normally, you would only really have to be concerned about packing for yourself and packing a 'go home' outfit for your baby.

The easiest way to handle packing is to first ask yourself who will be staying at the hospital and what they will be responsible to bring. If the father is staying, he should pack his own bag, have the list of people to call once the baby gets here, and pack all of the electronics you will need for the birth (camera, video camera, etc.)

If you have special items for your baby, you might want to consider packing them in a special diaper bag. This is particularly helpful if there is a certain formula, lotion, or type of clothing that you want your baby to have. For instance, let's say that this is your second child and your first child had very sensitive skin. It would make sense for you to pack some sensitive skin products in your baby's bag so that you don't have to worry about their skin breaking out while they are at the hospital.

For your bag, you want to remember to think of things you will need both before and after you give birth. Not only will you need toiletries, but you will also want to bring a nice nightgown, something to keep you occupied for your downtime at the hospital, and anything that you will want for pain management during the birth.

Expectant Mother's Hospital Checklist

For Mother

[ ] Your birth plan
[ ] Two sets of outfits (preferably with front opening for breastfeeding
[ ] Disposable panties
[ ] Toiletries (your hospital will also provide a basic set for you)
[ ] Nursing bra
[ ] Maternity pads
[ ] Slippers
[ ] Marriage Certificate
[ ] Identity Card
[ ] Letter from doctor (if any)
[ ] Cord blood collection kit (if any)
[ ] Tons of anticipation for the newest member in your family ☺
[ ] _____
[ ] _____
[ ] _____
[ ] _____
[ ] _____

For The Bundle Of Joy

[ ] Receiving blanket / Baby blanket

[ ] Baby mittens and booties

[ ] Baby hat

[ ] One outfit for the trip home (All-in-one stretch outfits are best)

For Daddy

[ ] Entertainment for your hours of waiting

[ ] Camera / Video Cam

[ ] Change of clothes

[ ] Toiletries

[ ] Snacks

[ ] List of people to call

Conclusion

There is nothing more amazing then the experience of bringing a new life into this world. But this amazing experience is also going to mean many changes to the life that you currently have.

Remember, the earlier you start preparing for these changes, the easier your pregnancy will be. After all, the act of growing a baby will be stressful in itself, you don't need to add any undue stress on top of it.

Pregnancy and labor is not going to be the same for every person. Millions of people have given birth and every single one of them has had a different experience than the other.

In the same sense, billions of babies have been born but no two babies are exactly alike.

You might not be able to prepare for all of those unexpected things that are bound to happen to you in your own unique pregnancy experience, but you can prepare for the things that you know will happen.

To You And Your Baby!

Vanessa Chong

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