

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark hair, smiling warmly while holding a baby. The woman is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. The baby, who has light hair and blue eyes, is wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

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Current through 2017

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The nitty gritty truth

What the baby books don't tell you

by Megan Murray Elsener

You can read all the pregnancy and baby books you want. The truth is, you still don't know what's coming. Having a baby rocks your world, both in amazing and alarming ways. So brace yourself because here is some of the real stuff that is coming your way.

Pre-birth:

That beautiful pregnancy glow everybody talks about? That's really people just being polite. In reality, you're likely swollen, from your ankles to your face, and as you tick closer to 40 weeks, the ability to actually be comfortable is rare. With constant bathroom breaks to struggling to flip from side-to-side in bed, you are getting a preview of what sleepless nights look like. Count yourself as lucky if you haven't yet experienced the "joy" of hemorrhoids, but beware they are likely around the corner.

Labor:

You may think you're prepared with your labor plan, packed bag and supportive spouse. In reality, labor can feel completely out of your control never knowing what to expect next. My husband likes to call labor "a horrific miracle." Inevitably, every labor is unique and cannot be predicted. Each woman walks away with her own combat story, with some scars, stitches and stretch marks to prove it. So come ready to impress all with your super-woman strength!

Post-birth:

That bundle of joy is finally here and so are the battle wounds to prove it. From your severely swollen lady parts to sore tush and cramping uterus, this is the part that can feel the most foreign and unspoken. The books never talk about the mesh underwear and huge ice packs you'll be wearing for days and how your hospital bathroom can resemble a crime scene after you pee. Plus, the pressure to poop from your nurses is something nobody is prepared for and can cause post-traumatic stress. Just know, each day the pain will lessen and your sweet baby will only keep getting cuter and cuter.

First few weeks:

Thank goodness for the euphoria that new babies bring because absolutely nothing has prepared new parents for the sleepless nights of a newborn. Those all-nighters you pulled in college? Not even close to the fatigue of getting up multiple times a night to feed, change, rock and get baby back to sleep. Plus a new baby brings lots of visitors and well-wishers, which often makes catching up on sleep during the daytime near impossible. After a few weeks, your body is still likely feeling mushy and you start to wonder if you will ever be able to stop wearing pads.

Six months later:

Baby is now sleeping longer stretches, getting on a nap schedule and making those adorable cooing and laughing sounds. Yet, why didn't anyone tell you that you still don't feel exactly like your pre-baby self? Suddenly you can't stop wetting yourself when you laugh or exercise. You feel like your hair is coming out in clumps every time you brush it. Those swollen feet have changed your shoe size completely. Your former perky boobs now feel saggy and lifeless. Ah, the joys (and adjustments!) of your post-baby body. Every time you look into those beautiful baby eyes, remind yourself it's been worth the journey and learn to embrace the new you.



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Where Will You Have Your Baby?

From taking your prenatal vitamins to getting the nursery ready, it seems like there are a million little things to do before the baby comes. One of your first decisions as a parent is where to deliver your infant. ❁ To help you get started, we've put together a list of 24 metro-area hospitals, including birthing rooms and birth rates. Expectant parents should make a list of questions to ask the staff and get a better feel for what each facility has to offer. ❁ Take advantage of hospital tours and find out which hospitals are convenient to your home. Be sure to figure out your insurance details beforehand and learn the policies for visitation and guests in the delivery room. ❁ Being prepared will lead to a better experience for you and your baby.



Hospital	Private (P) Mat. Beds	Birthing Rooms LDR/LDRP*	Births Per Month	C-Section Rate	Maternity Tours
DeKalb Medical 2701 N. Decatur Rd., Decatur, GA 30033 404-501-2229. dekalbmedicalcenter.org	62-P	18 LDR	375	16% Primary 16% Repeat	By appt. 404-501-9355 or online.
Eastside Medical Center 1700 Medical Way, Snellville, GA 30078 770-979-0200. eastsidemedical.com	22-P	13 LDR	100	34%	Second and fourth Thursdays at 7 p.m. 800-242-5662 or online.
Emory Johns Creek Hospital 6325 Hospital Pkwy., Johns Creek, GA 30097 678-474-7000. emoryjohnscreek.com	13-P	8 LDR	100	18% Primary 16% Repeat	Thurs. at 6 p.m. and Sat. at 10 a.m. Register online.
Emory University Hospital Midtown 550 Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta, GA 30308 404-778-7777. emoryhealthcare.org	39-P 8 Antepartum	11 LDR	400	15.3% Primary 13.1% Repeat	1st, 2nd and 3rd Thurs. at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. and on request. 404-778-7777

The information on this chart has been provided by each hospital. *Labor, Delivery, Recovery, Postpartum Rooms

Hospital	Private (P) Mat. Beds	Birthing Rooms LDR/LDRP*	Births Per Month	C-Section Rate	Maternity Tours
Grady Health System 80 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr., Atlanta, GA 30303 404-616-1000. gradyhealth.org	27-P	13 LDR	258	29.5%	By appt. 404-616-2229 Daily at noon
Gwinnett Women's Pavilion 550 Medical Center Blvd., Lawrenceville, GA 30045 678-442-3600. gwinnettmedicalcenter.org	37-P	19 LDR	460	33%	Tues. at 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. one Sat./month, 11 a.m. & noon. Register: 678-312-5000
Northeast Georgia Medical Center 743 Spring St. NE, Gainesville, GA 30501 770-219-9000. nghs.com	30-P 8 Antepartum	18 LDR	300	15% Primary 15% Repeat	Register online or 770-219-1495 by appt.
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Northside Hospital-Cherokee 201 Hospital Rd., Canton, GA 30114 770-720-5300. northside.com	10-P	8 LDRP	100	34%	By appt. 404-845-5555 or online.
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WellStar Cobb Hospital 3950 Austell Rd., Austell, GA 30106 770-732-4000. wellstar.org	46-P	20 LDR	297	33%	By appt. 770-956-7827
WellStar Douglas Hospital 8954 Hospital Dr., Douglasville, GA 30134 770-949-1500. wellstar.org	6-P	6 LDRP	39	26%	By appt. 770-920-6240
WellStar Kennestone Hospital 677 Church St., Marietta, GA 30060 770-793-5000. wellstar.org	39-P	21 LDR	467	35%	By appt. 770-956-7827
WellStar North Fulton 3000 Hospital Blvd., Roswell, GA 30076 770-751-2500. wellstar.org	30-P	6 LDR	100	17.4%	By appt. 770-751-2660
WellStar Spalding Regional Hospital 601 South 8th St., Griffin, GA 30224 770-228-2721. wellstar.org	21-P	4 LDR	91	38%	By appt. 770-467-6136 or online

How to Manage Common Aches and Discomfort

Pregnancy Pains

by Christa Melnyk Hines

The changing pregnant body may be one of Mother Nature's more astonishing feats, but nothing grounds us like the aches and pains that are part of the journey. Luckily, you can manage most pregnancy pain gently, safely and effectively.

If you're like many women juggling multiple responsibilities, you might feel tempted to grin and bear it, but don't.

"If you ignore pain and become increasingly less active, you can actually increase your pregnancy risks. Inactivity increases the risk of blood clots, for example, can weaken muscles, and may contribute to more complications or difficulty with labor," says Michael Proffitt, OB/GYN physician.

Why the pain? Hormones cause your joints to loosen and relax, abdominal muscles stretch and the pelvic bone separates. Your center of gravity shifts as you gain weight. These factors put extra strain on your musculoskeletal system.

Here's what to do:

Swap your shoes

Proper footwear can make a difference for aching joints and back pain. It's time to give stilettos a break and opt for low-heeled shoes with good arch support.

Lift correctly

Ask for help rather than lifting heavy objects yourself. If you must lift something or someone – like your crying toddler – squat down, bend at the knees and keep your back straight while lifting.

Seek back support

Sit in chairs with good lumbar support or place a small pillow behind your back while sitting. Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your knees can also help keep your back aligned.

"If your bed is too soft, place a board between the mattress and the box spring. This can help provide more support and alignment of the spine when you're lying on your side," Proffitt says.

Find relief

Apply hot or cold compresses to your back or opt for a prenatal massage. Massage can also help relieve tension and stress-induced headaches, common especially during the first trimester.

Exercise moderately

The exercises you choose during pregnancy will depend on your pre-pregnancy fitness level. Walking, water aerobics and prenatal yoga can help you control your weight and strengthen your core muscles, which can relieve strain on your back.

Eat healthy meals

Drink plenty of water and maintain a nutritious, well-balanced diet to control your weight and manage headaches. "Excess maternal weight gain has much to do with musculoskeletal issues such as back pain, neck pain and sciatica," says Bret Gordon, an OB/GYN physician.

Watch your sodium intake

Nearly every pregnant woman suffers from swollen ankles and feet in the final weeks of pregnancy. Support stockings can help. Gordon also suggests reducing your sodium intake and remaining well-hydrated.

Don't Delay

Contact your doctor immediately, if you experience:

- * Chest pain
- * Stroke-like symptoms
- * Pain associated with fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, vaginal bleeding or changes in bowel habits
- * Rhythmic severe back pain that comes and goes every few minutes, which could indicate pre-term labor

Put your feet up

Rest can also ease swelling feet and ankles, headaches and pressure on your back. If you must sit or stand for long periods of time, prop one leg on a low stool and then switch legs to relieve the pressure on the lower back.

"The importance of adequate time off their feet is a tough sell to moms-to-be who have jobs, responsibilities and other kids that require their attention," Gordon says. "But listen to your body. If it's telling you to rest, you should."

Try other therapies

Proffitt says many of his patients benefit from physical therapy when at-home pain management techniques aren't working. Acupuncture or aquatics therapy can also help. If you seek chiropractic care, he recommends a chiropractor trained in treating pregnant patients.

Reach out for mental health support

Just as emotional suffering can manifest as physical ailments, physical pain can hurt your overall sense of wellbeing contributing to depression or anxiety. Talk to your caregiver and circle of support if you're struggling.

Contact your doctor with any concerns

Your physician should be able to help you pinpoint the source of the pain and how to best manage it.



Pregnancy Stretches: Find some stress- and pain-relieving exercises at MayoClinic.org and WhatToExpect.com, and check out prenatal yoga classes in metro Atlanta or videos available on Amazon or YouTube.



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7 Things You Need to Know for Baby's Bath

Giving a newborn a bath is terrifying – they're so tiny, so fragile and so dependent upon you. Follow these bath time tips from Dr. Amy Kim, a board-certified Atlanta dermatologist and Mohs surgeon, and you'll be a pro in no time. Dr. Kim, a mother of two, developed her own line of infant skincare products, Baby Pibu (babypibu.com).

*** Establish a good routine.** With a good nighttime routine, your baby will begin to associate a bath with bedtime. He will understand that after bathing comes changing, feeding and lights out. This will help him calm down and get ready for sleep.

*** Set the right conditions.** It seems like common sense, but you need to make sure your baby's bath water is warm, not hot. You don't need a fancy temperature gauge – if it's too hot for you, it's too hot for him.

*** Keep baths really short.** We all think of babies splashing in the bathtub and enjoying every second of it. While older babies may enjoy baths, most newborns do not. In fact, it's not uncommon for newborn babies to wail through the whole thing. Get

your baby in and out of a bath in less than five minutes. Water is actually very drying for skin so the less time spent sitting in water, the better.

*** Only clean the dirty parts.** Babies are actually not that dirty, so it's best not to use soap all over that delicate newborn skin. Soap can strip the skin of its natural oils and dry it out. Use soap on the hair, hands, feet, armpits, neck folds and groin. For all other areas, just use water. Use a fragrance-free 2-in-1 hair and body wash. Fragrance is one of the leading culprits of skin allergies. Using a 2-in-1 wash with an easy-to-open top leaves your other hand free to support his head.

*** Exfoliate to prevent cradle cap.** Cradle cap is a common skin condition that is caused by the build up of oils on the skin. It is often seen on the scalp, the eyebrows, around the nose and behind the ears. Use a soft bristle brush with cleanser on his scalp and gently wash with circular motions. Do not use cleanser on the face. Instead, use a wet washcloth and your finger on those other areas. Exfoliating the excess oil can help prevent cradle cap.



Puj Tub

*** Hydrate to keep skin healthy and soft.** Apply a moisturizing cream right after bath to lock in moisture. Be sure to use a cream or an ointment rather than a lotion. Lotions are made mostly of water and will not be as effective.

*** Never, ever leave your baby alone.** This tip seems simple, but it is important. Leave any interruptions – the phone, the dog, the doorbell – until after bath time. You cannot leave a baby alone in the bath even for a few seconds. Drowning accidents can happen in just a couple of inches of water.

– Amanda Allen

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Puj Tub

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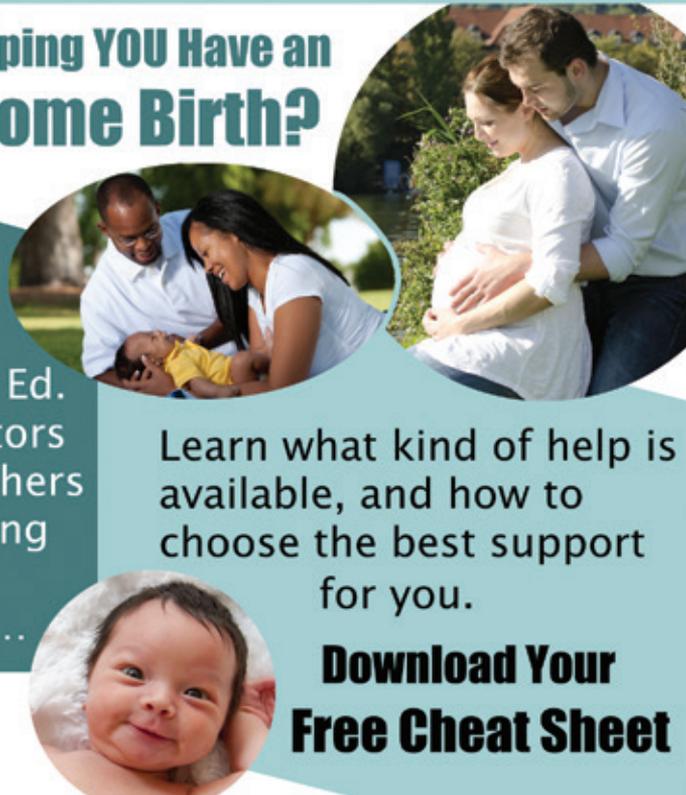
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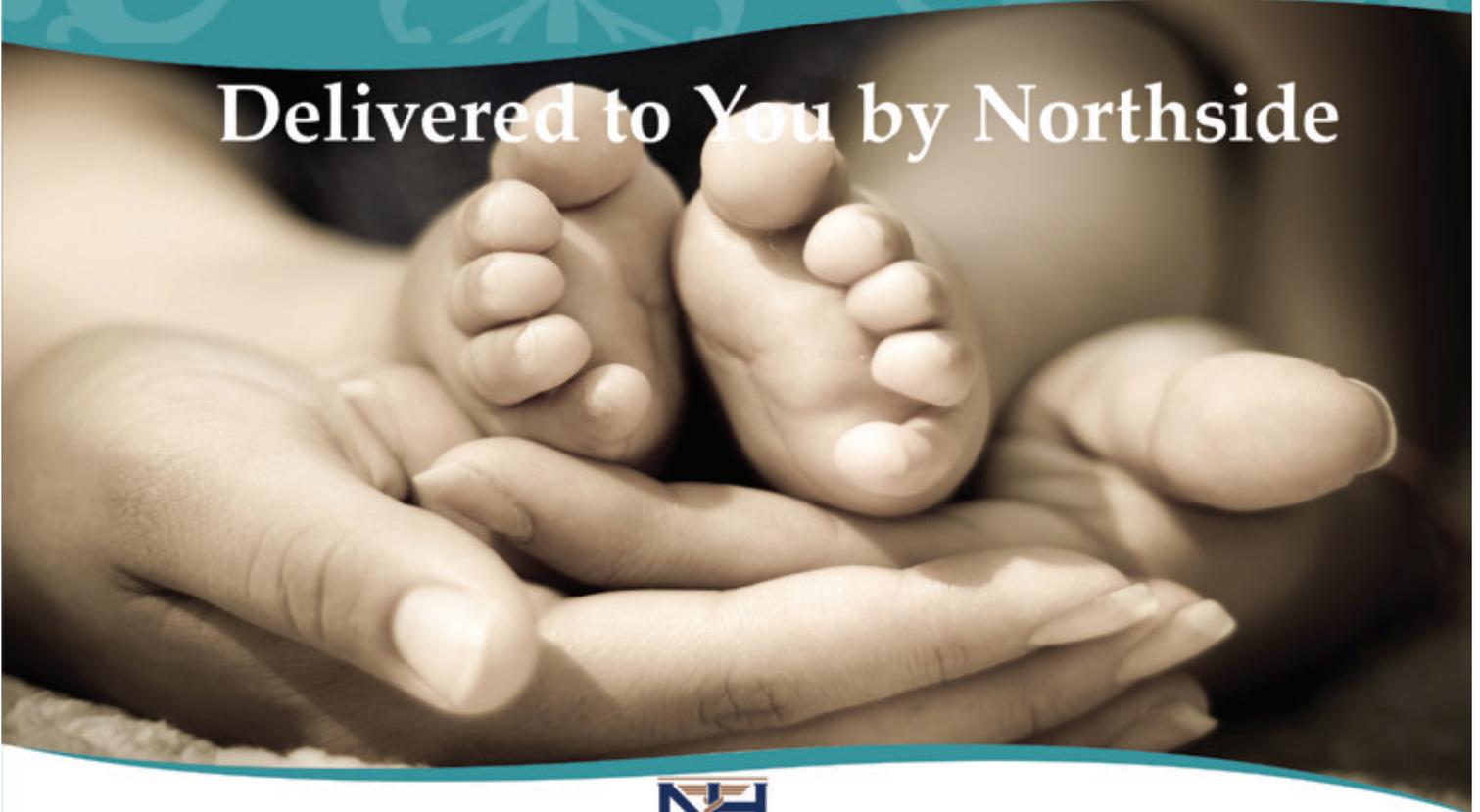
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Dr. Jackie earned dual Bachelor of Science degrees from the University of Mississippi and Alcorn State University, later earning her medical degree from the University of Mississippi. In 1997, Dr. Jackie completed her residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Medical Center of Central Georgia and Mercer University. After residency, she started in private practice where she also became affiliated with Northside Hospital in Atlanta and has remained for 18 years.

Dr. Jackie is also a two-time breast cancer survivor, so she understands the effects of personal health challenges. In 2013, Dr. Jackie founded the 50 Shades of Pink Foundation, an organization that pays tribute to women and men diagnosed with breast cancer.



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Cont'd on page 20

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Your hands are already full with preparing the nursery and installing the car seat. When baby arrives your time will be consumed by bottles, wipes, diapers and of course the baby. If sleep isn't a commodity during this time then how will you make time for cleaning?

2 You don't like cleaning

It's OK to admit that cleaning isn't something you enjoy. Instead spend your time at the park or playing with baby.

3 You work full time

Just returned to work? It's not easy to be back and the last thing you want to do is come home and clean. Spend that time playing with baby or catching up on sleep.

4 Family life is busy

Wake up, get ready, eat breakfast, drop off baby, go to work, pick up baby, come home, feed baby, eat,

shower and back to bed. Then you wake up and do it again the next day. A dirty house adds to the stresses that you already accumulate.

5 Reward yourself

Your most important job is being a mom. Put your feet up after a long day, because you deserve a break. Let a cleaning service tidy up for you.



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arbormontessori.org
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