

childbearing

The newsletter of the Lower Mainland Childbearing Society

Carriages, Cribs, and Carriers *what do babies really need?*

One can go a little bonkers when it comes to baby gear. There are so many nifty gadgets and devices that seem to promise a smarter baby, a happier baby, happier parents, more sleep, more quiet, more learning, or more time.

Plus, so many items are simply too cutesy-adorable to pass up! Trying to filter the truly necessary from the nice-to-have from the total-waste-of-money items is not easy. New parents can be easily seduced by all the gizmos and gear available, while veteran parents' advice varies wildly from person to person. So what is a new parent to do? How do we pick our way through the endless aisles of options in any reasonable way?

This issue on Baby Gear explores these very questions. Since we are ill-equipped to endorse specific equipment, we have instead provided a few expert opinions to consider: **Sandra Poelzer**, owner of **Wee Ones Reruns**, and **Tanis Frame**, owner of **MamaMaven**, both weigh in on what to consider when choosing baby gear. Our question of the quarter considers what to look for in a baby carrier. Finally, we have provided the results of our online baby gear preferences thread: what have our readers found to be the most, and least, useful. Read on, the answers may surprise you.

✉ *Stephanie Ondrack, editor*

childbearing news

Happy Travels!

The Childbearing Society extends a heartfelt goodbye and giant thank you to our long time colleague **Susan Woodhouse**, who set out with her family and dogs on a long road trip across Canada. Susan has been with Childbearing longer than any of our current instructors and will be sorely missed by all of us. Good luck and bon voyage!



l to r: Diane, Melina, Jennifer, Susan, Katy, Stephanie and Jasmine at Susan's farewell lunch.

The Childbearing Society is: Aleksandra Henderson, *President*; Jennifer Landels, *Newsletter Production Editor*; Stephanie Ondrack, *Registrar, Secretary, Marketing Director, Newsletter Content Editor*; Katy Thomson, *Packages*; Molly Eitzen, *Treasurer*; Diane Donaldson, *Past President*.
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Apprentice Instructor: Shahrzad Tayebi

In This Issue:

Focus on: Baby Gear

- ~ Simple & Green
- ~ The True Necessities
- ~ Top 10 Best & Worst
- ~ Carrier Safety

Birth and Beyond Stories

- ~ Ella
- ~ Let it Happen
- ~ Michael

Next Issue:

The Second Baby

childbearing news (continued)

Dads' class now ongoing

Our recent **Crash Course for Dads** workshops, hosted by **Cameron Phillips**, have been so successful that we have decided to provide them on an ongoing basis. Look for them alongside our Healthy Pregnancy courses.

Postpartum Class Day Change

Postpartum Circles are changing days! Starting in October 2011, our friendly postpartum classes will be moving to Tuesdays from 12:30pm – 2pm. We hope that this change will accommodate more families, so that more of you can enjoy these supportive and informative parenting circles.

✧ Letters & Announcements ✧

We love to hear from you! Keep sending your comments on our newsletter, our classes, your birth and parenting experiences, and anything else related to the childbearing year that you'd like to get off your chest to: stephanie@childbearing.org



Graduates of the Early Spring Series

I am a registered midwife and the founder of **Bloom Breastfeeding Center**. We provide high quality breastfeeding information, support and supplies to women and their families both before and after the birth of their baby. Our services include clinic and home based lactation consultant appointments, prenatal breastfeeding classes, breast pump rentals and the sale of supplies to support breastfeeding.

I am hoping that you would be willing to add this resource to your list of community resources.

If you would like more information please don't hesitate to contact us or visit www.bloombreastfeeding.com.

warmly,
Lisa Sutherland



Our prenatal teacher, Aleksandra, was very experienced and extremely

knowledgeable. She helped us feel prepared for what was happening. The classes were very well structured, hands-



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on, and enlightening. My parents took their prenatal classes from the Childbearing Society in the 70's for the birth of my brother and then he took them a few years ago. Our entire family has been very happy with The Childbearing Society and we look forward to continuing on this relationship. Thank you for helping us welcome Henry into our world.

Lisa Enfield



The classes we took were extremely helpful. Neither my husband nor myself were scared going in to labour. We felt very prepared (although nothing can REALLY prepare you!). We are so glad that we did our prenatal classes with Childbearing. Our instructors were amazing! Thank you, thank you.

Colleen Howard Waldegger



Focus on:

Gearing up: *Simply Green and Healthy*

by Tanis Frame

Every week I spend time with parents who are overwhelmed trying to navigate through all the **stuff** that comes with kids, and in particular trying to sort out what is green and healthy for both the planet and for their little ones.

As the marketing machine of our consumerism oriented society preys on our need to get it 'right' and be 'good parents', we are sadly lead to believe that without oodles of gear we'll never be able to raise a healthy happy child. In fact, the reality goes something more like this: **all your baby really needs is YOU!** Sigh, what a relief!

Not to say that some gear, like a great baby carrier, a few clothes, and perhaps some diapers aren't very useful. And you will no doubt have those one or two pieces of kid gear that you wouldn't have survived without. But the thing is, your favourite item will no doubt be on someone else's list of completely useless purchases. Yes, we are all different, and so are our little ones.

You may want to balance the 'oh that's SO cute!!' with your family's values regarding health, environment, social justice, and budget. With all the science, label reading, marketing hype and greenwashing, it can certainly begin to feel complicated to say the least. Then you sprinkle in a healthy dose of mama-guilt and you've got a recipe for overwhelmed and confused parents.

What can we do about it? That part isn't always so complicated. In fact, the answer is the opposite: just simplify.

When it comes to going green, creating healthy spaces for your kids, and making life less overwhelming, less really is more. And you end up saving yourself money, chores and headaches while you're at it. Now that's multitasking!

Make your STUFF multitask as much as you do

Resist the urge to buy products that are disposable, have a short lifespan, or only one purpose. For example, select a wet bag that will work for cloth diapers, then bathing suits, and one day, soccer cleats.

Simply Green Play

How do we simplify while greening the toys? Let's take a look at a wool felt carrot. For baby it's an ideal teething toy. It feels great on sore gums, is a natural and healthy option for chewing (no need to fret about which kind of plastic is being dined on), and wool is naturally antibacterial (bonus!). Then, when baby grows, instead of tossing your plastic teething toys, that humble felt carrot moves into the play kitchen and lives on for years. It's made of a material that is not only natural, but one that can be repaired, rather than thrown out, should it get 'broken'. The lowly felt carrot can give a new perspective on what kind of toys really are more economical.



Share and share alike

In addition to the wonder of hand-me-downs, and visiting your local library, you could also try a toy exchange with other families. New toys rotate in the door as others rotate out, then they magically reappear a few months later, without shopping, and without buying another storage system. Save money, save the clutter, and build community while modelling desirable behaviour: more great multitasking!

Buying less stuff means fewer labels to read and decipher, less greenwashing to navigate, less to send to the landfill, and less to manage, to trip over and clean up each night.

The good news is that as parents, we are blessed with endless options to select what will fit our unique family with our unique values, lifestyle and priorities. The challenge comes in figuring those out and being discerning.

So next time the latest coolest gadget catches your eye-check it out for sure, then ask 'is this the one for me? Is this really going to make our life better or my days simpler? Or shall I treat mama to a massage instead?' Then just go outside and play... it doesn't get any simpler than that.



☞ Tanis Frame (above left) is the mother of two behind the trusted resource, MamaMaven. She supports parents as they navigate the stuff of parenthood, and what is good for the planet and their kids' health. Tanis serves up her depth of knowledge with a healthy dose of humour and truly believes the right choices are different for each family. www.mamamaven.ca.

Baby Gear: The Good, the Bad, the Unnecessary

by Sandra Poelzer

W hat baby items do we really need?

This is a question we all struggle with.

This is a question we all struggle with. It begins in the first trimester amidst all the excitement, as we start to ponder what we might need, how we will parent, what life with baby will be like. Becoming a parent is one of the biggest events in our lives. We start to research everything 'baby'. During our endless hours of research, we are bombarded with advertisements in nearly every publication, all trying to convince us that we need every baby gizmo and gadget out there.

Marketing companies see a new parent as a new consumer. They've even got us believing that we need to purchase a book to tell us what to buy. Some of us ask our friends and family for advice, some of us ask the sales clerk at the local baby boutique. But the answers we get are all so varied.

So, what do we actually need for baby?

Well, first, let's separate the necessities from the niceities. Think back to previous generations. Where did their babies sleep? What did their children play with? Now yes, times have changed, life is busier. But have our babies changed? No, our babies are the same as generations before. The difference is us, as a society. Statistics show, that we are now starting our families later in life. This is giving us time to be further ahead in our careers and more financially secure. Not only are we starting later, we are also returning to work earlier. According to Statistics Canada 65.8% of women with children under the age of two are participating in the labour force. So what does this mean? As parents, we are now busier than any generation before us. In order to keep our households and lifestyles running, we need to make our lives easier. We need to buy items that offer us convenience and free up some of our time.

Number one on any new parent's list is a car seat.

When picking out a car seat, do your research. How well does the seat fit in your car? How well will a newborn baby fit in the seat? Will you be using the car seat in multiple cars? When buying a car seat, check the store's return policy just in case the seat does not fit properly in your car. Once you have purchased your car seat, it is a good idea to have a certified child restraint technician check or help install the seat and go

over car seat safety. To find a workshop run by a technician near you, call Kids in the Back @ 604-617-0624. It is not a good idea to buy a used car seat, as car seats have expiry dates, regulations change and there is no way to tell if the seat has been involved in a collision. Your child's safety is not the place to save a few dollars.

The nursing mother

Making the nursing pair (mum and baby) comfortable is very important, but there is no need to go out and buy a special chair. Instead, use what you have at home. Getting comfortable is all about the accessories. I found a nursing pillow very helpful, especially in the beginning. Make sure that the nursing pillow is large enough to wrap around a postpartum mum's tummy. A removable, washable cover is also good feature. Some mums prefer to use throw cushions — it's really a matter of what works for you. For me, a good quality breast pump was a must, as I was worried about engorgement and I intended on returning to work early. Whether you go with an electric or manual pump depends on how much you will be using it. For occasional pumping, a hand pump should be sufficient. Some women even discover they prefer to express milk by hand, and forego the pump altogether.

Carriers

Babies are happiest when they are close to someone. Not only will wearing your baby encourage bonding, but it will also make your life easier. For my own sanity and my child's, nothing beat going for a brisk walk outside with him on me. There are many great carriers on the market and you may end up with more than one for different stages and situations. When purchasing a carrier, take into consideration who will be using it, and what your intentions are. Will you be using it for long periods of time or just around the house? Will the carrier fit both you and your partner? Do you feel comfortable wearing it? Is it washable? Can you breastfeed in it? Is it primarily for newborns, or will it carry the weight of a toddler? If you can, borrow a few different carriers from friends to see what you like best.

Strollers

Strollers come in many different price brackets, sizes and shapes. The stroller may be the most expensive baby item you purchase, so it's a good idea to research them thoroughly. Think about what your needs might be. Will you be taking the stroller in and out of the car a lot? Will you be using it on the bus? Do you have stairs to ascend? You may want to pay close attention to the size and weight of the stroller. Do you enjoy long walks? Live close to gravel or mulch trails? Are you an outdoor enthusiast? Perhaps an all terrain stroller with large pneumatic tires is more your style. Are you planning on having another baby soon? An add-on seat would be a great option. What about the size of the basket? Can you push the stroller with one hand? Is a cup holder important to you? Does the seat or handle reverse so baby can see you?

(Continued on page 5)

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(Continued from page 4)

There are so many stroller options you can almost compare it to buying a car. In fact, the stroller might even cost as much as your first car did. Forget about asking the salesperson at the boutique what stroller they like. Anytime you see a stroller on the roll that attracts you, ask the parent how they like it, what features are good, and what's not so good. Fellow parents can offer great advice.

Hangin' out

Do you need an exersaucer, bouncy chair, jumper and a swing? No, not really, but one of these might be quite convenient. There will be times when you need a break, baby needs a change of pace or perhaps you need to make dinner. This is when one of the above-mentioned items would be helpful. Swings and bouncy chairs are generally used with younger babies and can have a calming effect on them. The exersaucer and jumper are best used with a baby who is over four months old and has strong muscle control. Exersaucers and jumpers are meant to be fun and entertaining to baby. They do not help baby walk earlier. It is recommended that you limit baby to 20 minutes per session in any of these entertainment devices: everything in moderation. And of course, supervise baby.

Consider buying used or borrowing baby items

Babies grow out of toys, equipment and clothing very quickly. It is always nice to be on the receiving end of quality hand me downs, and to continue passing items along to others. It is also nice to save some money and the environment by purchasing pre-loved items. When purchasing anything pre-loved, it is always wise to check the overall condition of an item (mould, stains, frays, cracks, missing parts). Make sure that the item has not been included in any safety recalls. To check items for recalls, you can contact the

manufacturer or look at Health Canada's site www.healthycanadians.gc.ca. This site is easy to navigate and has an internal search engine for recalls and safety advisories.

Craigslist can be a great resource to find those larger, more costly baby items such as strollers. Garage sales and swap-meets can offer great deals, but be cautious, as some items may not meet current safety standards or may be recalled. The bonus of swap-meets is that almost every seller is a parent and potentially has good advice as to what you may need and what items really worked for them. Kids' swap-meets have a varied selection of items, from equipment to clothing and books.

When it comes to buying used clothing and toys, thrift stores can be fun. The key to finding good items at a thrift store is sorting through the not-so-great items, and checking back often. The rewards can be considerable, especially with baby items priced at a dollar or two a piece.

Consignment stores are a reliable option, although a little pricier than kids' swaps or thrift stores, they offer a wide variety of almost new items at approximately half the retail price. Stores are generally well organized and full of quality, brand names. Most consignment stores will accept credit cards, and some have return policies. Stock and selection are constantly changing, so it is worth checking back often. And remember, if you see something you like, grab it; it won't be there next week.

The most economical way to outfit baby is borrowing items, or being on the receiving end of hand me downs. Friends and family with older children are often happy to pass their baby items along in order to regain some much-needed space in their homes. Another great idea is to set up a toy lending library with your friends. There are many ways to save money; you just need to be creative.

In the beginning, it is tempting to go out and buy everything that you think you will need for baby's first year. But it may be wise to wait until baby reaches the correct age and stage for each item. By waiting until baby is ready, you will have more time to research what model will be the best fit for your family. You will spread the financial cost out over the course of the year and avoid cluttering your house, helping to create a more calming, welcoming space for everyone. And best of all, you may find friends are willing to loan you many things, especially items that take up a large amount of space or are used for a short period of time.

Yes our lives are busier than previous generations, and yes there are more things touted as necessities to modern parents. But keep in mind, the more stuff we buy, the more money we spend, which means the more we work and the less time we spend with our children. Be choosy about what you do purchase for your little one. And remember, the best way to encourage your child's development is to play with them, as Mother Nature intended.

Sandra Poelzer is a homeschooling mother of three children, and also the owner of Wee Ones Reruns, a popular children's consignment store located in East Vancouver.



According to You:

The Top 10 Most Used and Most Useless Baby Items

As many of you know, we conducted a loose and unofficial poll on our Yahoo group this summer. We asked the question, "What baby gear items did you find the most, and least, useful?" We received about 50 responses, with some people limiting themselves to their number one item for each side, and others contributing long and comprehensive lists. Far from scientific, with no hint of statistical significance, we present to you an edited summary of the results. To merit mention in our tally, baby gear items had to elicit more than two votes. Thus, many items that you submitted are not present in our summary.

Draws, Ties and Cat's Games

Some things appeared with almost identical frequency on both lists. These included:

Bottles: The usefulness of bottles obviously depends completely on whether you use them or not. If you bottle feed, they are literally and unarguably essential. If you do not bottle feed at all, they are clearly unnecessary. So while they appeared a couple times on both lists, I am mentioning them here instead of including them in the tally.

Nursing Covers: These also deserve a special mention. They only appeared on a small handful of lists, but some mothers described them with affronted indignity, while others praised their contribution.

"What an insult! I don't cover my own head while I'm eating, I need to see my baby's latch, we like to make eye-contact, the cover got in the way, and besides, it's airless and stuffy under there!"

"They allowed me to breastfeed in public while retaining a sense of modesty"

Most Useful

1. Carriers

Absolutely resounding winner, with over 30 mentions. Many people just listed the generic term "carrier" or "sling", while others specified brands or types. Of the brands mentioned, ERGO was the clear favourite with about 18 hits. The runners up, in order of preference, were the Moby or Cuddly Wrap (combined, since they're so similar), the Beco, the Baby Buddha, followed by single mentions of various brands of other carriers, such as the Bjorn, woven wraps, and ring slings.

"The Ergo was by far the best carrier I have used. In the beginning it took some time getting used to but once I figured it out it made my life SO much easier, especially once I learned how to breastfeed in it."

Question of the Quarter

Q: I have heard that some baby carriers are unsafe, and that wearing your baby the wrong way can be dangerous. Can you explain the rules to me?

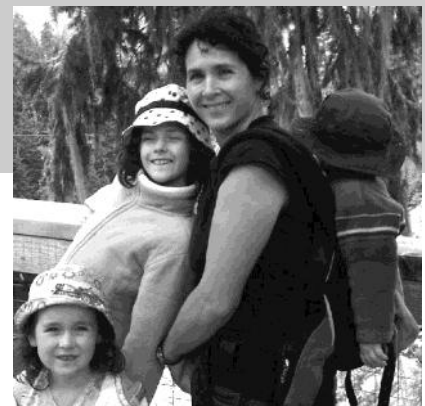
A: Babywearing can be a satisfying solution to meeting baby's need to be held, while allowing you some much-needed hands-free time. Babywearing provides an easy way to transport baby on walks, without the hassle or bulk of bringing a stroller. Best of all, babywearing has many positive effects on baby's sensory, emotional, cognitive, and physical development: it strengthens neck and core muscles, it promotes bonding, it lowers stress hormones, and it provides opportunities for eye contact, breastfeeding, and shared experiences.

BUT, as you rightly point out, babywearing can indeed be unsafe if done incorrectly. If you observe the following simple guidelines, you and your baby can enjoy safe and pleasant babywearing all the time.

- You should be able to kiss the top of baby's head. Your baby should be situated where he would be if he were in your arms. In other words, avoid carriers or wraps that position baby too low on your body, as this can be unsafe.
- Make sure baby can breathe. Basically, avoid covering baby's face with fabric, and avoid crunching your baby into any position that prevents her from raising her head. Her chin should not be squashed onto her chest.
- Facing you is preferable to facing outwards. This is not so much a safety concern as a physical development concern. Baby's spine and hips are in a healthier position when inwards, or in a 'cradle' position. When baby faces outwards, he is usually putting too much weight on his crotch, and his hips are leaning forward at an awkward angle. As well, babies benefit from being able to see your face, to feel reassured by your presence, eye contact, and facial expressions.

That's it! If you follow these simple tips, you and your baby can enjoy babywearing for many months, or even years.

✉ *Stephanie Ondrack*



(Continued from page 6)

2. "Somewhere safe to put your baby down while you do stuff"

This category got quite a few votes. Broken down, the bouncy chair was in the lead with about 10 mentions, followed by Baby Arches or Play Mats (combined) with 5 mentions, and then the exersaucer with 2 mentions. Several other devices in this category (swings, jumperoo, bassinette with mobile, etc) got one mention each.

"You absolutely need somewhere to keep baby content for a few minutes while you brush your teeth, grab the laundry, or make a sandwich"

"Cloth diapers were an upfront investment but have already saved us so much money and since we plan on having more children there will be additional savings."

3. Cloths, Blankets, and Washable Wipes

I combined these three categories because so many people merged them. In total, these items formed a coalition that earned an impressive 16 votes. While some people were clearly talking about one single use (wrapping baby) or another (cleaning spit up), there was no obvious way to separate them. Too many of the mentions referred to mixed use. For example, "lots of soft, flannel, receiving blankets or cloths ... carried everywhere to clean up messes, wrap babes in, and generally solve all manner of problems".

4. Strollers

Strollers ranked high on both the most and least useful lists. Perhaps this has to do with the age of the baby in question, since many people mentioned that they did not use one for the first several months, but found it indispensable later. As a 'most useful' item, the stroller merited 8 votes.

5. Cloth Diapers

Cloth diapers got 7 mentions. These, obviously, are of no use to anyone exclusively using disposables, but unarguably essential to anyone using cloth.

6. Diaper Bag

Diaper bags scored a solid appearance on 6 people's most useful list. Interestingly, most of these entries explained that they do not use an actual 'Diaper Bag', but some other, less iconic substitute, such as a back pack or a simple fabric produce bag.

"Baby bag - No need to purchase a fancy baby bag from the baby store. We used a black tote (actually a yoga bag that I already had) that had lots of pockets and storage space"

(Continued on page 8)

"Yes, the stroller was essential for us. And really, even if you prefer baby-wearing, grandmoms and other 'old school' caregivers love taking baby for a stroll while you catch up on your sleep or need to eat. The stroller will grow with you. When baby is holding her head up walks to the park, beach and excursions are great with a stroller. I did love the baby carrier, but could not do without the stroller too."

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(Continued from page 7)

7. High Chairs

High chairs were next, ranking a total of 5 mentions. Almost everyone specified the brand they preferred, or at least described the style. Most people seemed to value light & portable, or easy-to-clean as the guiding features.

8. King-sized Bed

Next in line was the venerable king-sized bed. Not technically a 'baby item', this still received 4 independent mentions.

9. Bouncy Ball

Again, not marketed as a baby item, yet 3 people mentioned an exercise Ball in their list of most important things.

10. Child's Library Card

It is fascinating how many of these most-mentioned items are not traditional baby gear! Three people mentioned their child's library card, and another 4 people mentioned books or CD's.

Waste of Space

And now, for the other side of the coin, the items most often relegated to the basement, the re-gift pile, or Craigslist.

1. Crib

Traditionally regarded as one of the most essential baby items, our respondents ranked it as the very least useful. The crib got mentioned 14 times as an item that never got used. However, two people added the caveat that after they removed one side of it and used it like a co-sleeper, they got some mileage out of it after all.

2. Swing, Exersaucer, Bouncy Chair, Jolly Jumper

These devices share second place in both the most and least useful lists. I suspect this is partly because I combined the categories, so that people who love the bouncy chair but loathe the swing end up in both lists. Nonetheless, 11 people mentioned one of these items as completely useless.

My high chair is cheap and easy to clean, no nooks and crannies. With a plastic shower liner underneath I didn't get stressed about letting my child learn to handle food at his own pace"

"I would say that a king size bed is an essential baby item. Got one the second time round, and sure wish we had it the first time!!!"

"Good for bouncing baby when you're too tired to stand"

"We love the library! We visit the library as often as we can and have access to what seems like an endless supply of books and children's music whenever we want"

"I also wish that we never bought a crib as we quickly turned into bed sharers"

The mechanical swing was an annoying waste of space. It took up a lot of room and our daughter didn't ever like it. If she'd liked it, my opinion might be different!"

3. Strollers

The usefulness of the stroller seems to depend largely on the age of the baby. People with younger babies generally seemed to make do without, while people with older babies or toddlers seem to use them regularly. Altogether, strollers got 7 hits on the 'unnecessary' list.

4. Food Mills

Featured next on the useless list, with a total of 5 hits, are food mills or other gadgets to purée baby food. Since babies don't begin solids until at least six months, they are generally ready for table food at that age, completely bypassing the need for purées, cereals, or other glop.

5. Carriers

While no one listed 'carriers' as categorically useless, many people described one particular style or brand as something that did not work for them. The Baby Bjorn was the only repeat in this category with 4 mentions, followed by a few brands mentioned only once each. My impression is that preferences for particular carriers and slings are quite personal, and the same ones that work for some people do not work for others.

6. Diaper Bags

Similarly, while diaper bags got listed several times, it was always to critique a particular style or price-range, not to pan bags in general. Four people mentioned diaper bags. It sounds like there's an opportunity here for a redesign!

7. Baby Bath Tubs

Although a couple people did like these, they appeared 4 times on the unnecessary list.

8. Swaddlers

Swaddlers appeared 3 times on the useless list.

9. Pacifiers

These also ranked 3 votes for unnecessary, although I suspect an equal number of people, if asked, would say that they do find them useful.

"Our stroller was totally useless for the first months; we preferred the carrier"

"The food mill someone got us never got used at all, since our baby skipped purees entirely"

"Baby Bjorn Carrier. I did use this for the first month and not only was it very uncomfortable to use but it felt like she was uncomfortable in it as well"

"[Diaper Bags are] way too pricey, and not at all designed for walking while wearing baby in a carrier"

"We found it so much easier to just bring him in the tub or shower with us"

"We tried and tried, but our baby just hated being confined [swaddled]!"

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

10. Special Mentions

A few other items stand out, not because they got listed a lot — they did not — but because they appeared so completely unanimously on the “useless” list. It seems like none of the responders had any use for the following items:

- Pee Pee Tee Pees
- Wipes Warmers
- Bottle Warmers
- Tiny Baby Towels
- Baby Shoes
- Baby Hand Covers

- Diaper Stackers
- Baby Nightgowns

So, although opinion varied greatly on certain items, while others were clear winners or losers, we will close this poll with two final opinions from readers, “You hardly need anything, really. For the first few months all babies want is you”, versus “There are no useless baby items. You will use everything”. You decide.

All quotations and information are from members of The Childbearing Society's Yahoo Discussion Group. To join the group, e-mail us at registration@childbearing.org.

✉ Stephanie Ondrack

Birth Stories

Dear Ellie

by Christine Ou

Wow, you are just over two months old already! Daddy and I can barely believe it. This is the story of your birth:

Mommy and daddy had returned to Vancouver from living in Qatar when mommy was about 35 weeks pregnant. Being a nurse, mommy had expected to deliver in a hospital and get an epidural just like many of her friends. However, after learning about all the different choices for birth at prenatal class and what they could mean for mommy and baby, mommy and daddy decided to try and give birth to you at home. We wanted to make this entrance into the world as welcoming as possible for you and to minimize the number of interventions, which could lead to even more interventions that might be potentially more harmful than helpful for you.

The day before May 30th felt like a very ordinary day, yet it was the momentous evening of your arrival into the world. It was three days before your ‘estimated due date’ of June 2nd. That night, we went to bed around midnight after a nice visit with family.

At 2:30 in the morning, mommy woke up with contractions that were nothing like the ‘practice’ Braxton Hicks contractions that mommy had throughout the last few weeks of pregnancy. Mommy tried to take a Tylenol and go back to sleep, but the

discomfort was too much to ignore. I had imagined that I would have a more typical labour that had a long early stage — we had a bunch of TV shows for me to watch, I was going to read some gossip magazines, and maybe even bake during that time. But, nope, you were sending messages to mommy's brain that said to ‘cut to the chase’!

I woke Daddy up around 3:30. Daddy ran around like a headless chicken in between my contractions to get everything ready, laying out towels, cleaning the bath tub, making tea; because we had thought we would have more time to prepare for the big event. We called Debra, our doula, and the midwife around seven in the morning, and they were both here by eight or nine o'clock. Soon I was going through the transition phase. Around noon, while in the bathtub, mommy's water broke and before I knew it, I was trying to push you out. You were born after fifteen minutes of pushing, and much faster than mommy had thought. It was wonderful to give birth to you in the home that mommy grew up in. It was also pretty funny when I told your grandma and grandpa, when they arrived the next day to see you, that you were born at home in their bathroom.



Dearest Elizabeth, I think I have you to thank for such a wonderful birth experience. Mommy is the most uncoordinated person (she didn't even know how to get into a ‘lunge’ position in prenatal class), and yet, when it came to bringing you out into this world, my body just knew what to do. Welcome to our family, and thank you for filling our lives with joy.

Love, Mom.

Very special thanks to Debra Woods, our wonderful doula who helped us follow through our very last minute home birth plan — she accepted us into her care ten days before the birth; to Cora Beitel, the midwife who kindly stepped in when our midwife was already with another family; and our instructor Aleksandra Hendersen, who taught me so much about what to expect during labour and delivery and for presenting the knowledge in such a positive and empowering manner.

✉ Christine Ou

Let it Happen

by Jenna Thomson

So yep, it was a quick birth! Words of wisdom on a quick birth from my perspective:

Just let it happen.

I went from irregular contractions about 15 minutes apart to a baby in my arms in 7 hours. I started timing contractions around 3:30, called the doula for a heads up at 5:00, had her come over at 8:00 and by the time the midwives arrived around 9:00 my water had broken and I was pushing and my baby was born at 10:07. I was never afraid. There basically wasn't time to be afraid. I was well into "labour land" by the time the midwives arrived. Actually, they were midwives I'd never met before as my team was at another birth, and I swear I didn't actually "see" them until after the baby was delivered. I spent a lot of time on my hands and knees, moaning really deeply and using that deep low energy. I pushed for a while on the toilet, which

sounded kind of silly in theory but in practice was amazingly powerful. And I gave birth on a birthing stool, using gravity to my advantage. The whole thing was totally intervention-free except for a shot of oxytocin in my leg to help deliver the placenta.

Emotionally, I just let myself go with the flow, opening myself up to the fact that things were moving quickly and that there wasn't anything I could do about it. Holding back wasn't going to do anything but cause me pain — this kid was coming out whether I was ready or not! I was worried about how I'd deal with a quick birth, but it simply was what it was. And it was great. Honestly. And having our baby in our lives is like nothing I could have ever imagined. It's amazing.

by Jenna Thomson

Michael's Birth

by Maria Murray

Our son was born on January 25, 2011 in Zurich.

I had a very enjoyable pregnancy all the way to the very last day. I could sleep so well in the last months and the belly did not feel heavy and on the way as many others were saying. I think my long walks and yoga everyday made such a difference in my pregnancy experience.

I ended up having a long labour of about 33 hours. It began the day after my due date. I started having light contractions while I was shopping: they did not feel much different from the practice contractions except that as I was getting back home I noticed that they were regular with about 4 minutes in-between and 45 seconds long. I tried to relax and listened to the relaxation CD we received in the Childbearing course while waiting for my husband to come home from work.

We called the hospital and they advised us to come. At the hospital the midwife measured contractions, did the vaginal exam (the mucus plug was out), and said that we could go into the labour room if we wanted. I thought that this was still early labour and insisted that we go back home, which is just a twelve minute walk, and try to sleep. This was around 12am. However contractions were getting stronger so I was getting up, walking and breathing in order to deal with every new contraction.

At 5:30am my husband suggested that we go back to the hospital. The labour room was very nice and spacious, and the midwives were supportive. However I was getting quite tired and

started falling asleep between contractions. I also had to vomit a few times and did not feel like eating or drinking anything. By the late morning my contractions started getting less frequent and were almost 10-15 min apart. The midwife called the doctor and they suggested that since I was already so exhausted they should give me oxytocin to strengthen the contractions along with an epidural, otherwise I would not be able to cope with the pain. The midwife added that in her experience women in my situation could no longer be able to give birth without medical help.

 <p>chiropractic massage acupuncture naturopathy</p> <p>Dr. Shamira Rahim, DC, CACCP Dr. Giselle Chamberlain, DC, CACCP Dr. Bobby Parmar, BAsc, ND Alison Coolican, RMT Lori Main, RMT Patricia Peterson Low, R.Ac</p>	<p>Pre and Postnatal Care</p> <p>Childhood Wellness</p> <p>Breech Presentation</p> <p>Webster Technique</p> <p>Fertility</p>
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(Continued from page 10)

I was so angry! In our birth plan I clearly stated my strong wish for a natural birth with no pain medication or any other intervention unless it was absolutely necessary. I was confident that my body had the strength it needed to deliver the baby. From prenatal classes I knew that I had to start moving more. So once everyone left the room to give us time to think, we turned on nice music and just started dancing, and doing various labour positions I learned in the course. I also forced myself to drink regularly and had a little food. In half an hour, my contractions were again regular and intense. Breathing worked perfectly for me! By about 8pm I was fully dilated.

The pushing was the most painful part. I started with the side lying position as I thought this would be most comfortable, but because of the pain I could not keep my legs open. So I ended up delivering the baby in the hands-and-knees position. He was born at 11pm, 52cm tall and 3.56kg. He did very well throughout the labour. He was given to me right away to breastfeed. It was such a happy moment — his eyes were so alert!

The breastfeeding worked perfectly from the very beginning and the baby is still fully breastfed, although in a couple of weeks, at 6 months, we will start introducing solid foods.

I am so grateful to you for such an excellent prenatal course! It gave me so much confidence before, during and after the birth. Thanks to it, I was able to fight for a kind of birth experience I wanted.

✶ Maria Murray

Editor's note: the names in this article have been changed by request of the author.

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www.birthingbuddies.com

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604-838-0788 / 1-877-838-0788
www.bumbini.ca

Mamamaven

Consultant
www.mamamaven.ca

New & Green Baby Company

604-323-4145
www.newandgreen.com

Room For Two Baby & Maternity

1409 Commercial Drive, Vancouver
604-255-0508

Wee Ones Reruns

604-708-0956
weeonesreruns@shaw.ca

You Pillows, Mother/Baby Support

604-808-6945
info@youpillows.com

Financial Services

Andrew Lu, CFP, Insurance Specialist

604-232-1798
andrew.lu@cooperators.ca

Fitness

Peltz, Stephanie, ND, Yoga Instructor

778-991-2084
www.drpeltz.com

Health Care

Abrams, Carolyne, Family Osteopath

604-730-5950
info@vancouverosteopathy.net

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604-678-8600
www.acubalance.ca

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604-733-2632
www.bodahealth.ca

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www.evolvevitality.com

Kalef, Dr Mia, Craniosacral Therapist

604-908-1214
www.emergingfamilies.com

Peltz, Dr Stephanie, ND, Doula

778-991-2084
www.drpeltz.com

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604-688-5437
www.bonnchiropractic.com

Pregnancy & Postpartum Support

Birth Rocks

Corina Bye, Doula, CBE
www.birthrocks.com

Lark Doula Services

778-839-7699
www.thelark.ca

Mamaspeak

604.266.8124
meralon@mamaspeak.com

Community Resources

Information and Counselling

BCW Breastfeeding Clinic 604-875-2424
BCW Lactation Consultants 604-875-2282
Bloom Breastfeeding Centre
www.bloombreastfeeding.com

Breast Milk Bank 604-875-2345 Ext 7607
Dial-a-Dietician 604-732-9191
Family Place (Westside) 604-738-2819
Family Place (Eastside) 604-255-9841
www.eastsidefamilyplace.org

Family Services of Vancouver
1616 West 7th Ave 604-731-4951
202-1193 Kingsway 604-874-2938
Infant and Child Seat Information
BCAA Consumer Service 604-298-2122

Safe Start Programme 604-875-3458
ICAN Vancouver 604-734-4226
Post Caesarean Birth Support 604-433-5827
La Leche League www.LLLC.ca
Newborn Hotline 604-737-3737
Pacific Postpartum Support 604-255-7999
Parents in Crisis Line 604-669-1616

Support for Grieving Parents
BC Children's Social Work
604-875-2345 Ext 7358
BC Women's Social Work 604-875-2424
Ext 6161

Vancouver Breastfeeding Clinic 604-738-1912
Volunteer Grandparents Assn. 604-736-8271
Westcoast Family Resource 604-255-9568

Doula Referrals

Doula Services Association 604-515-5588

Vancouver Coastal Health

Vancouver Health Department 604-875-6381
Evergreen Health Centre 604-872-2511
North Community Health Office 604-253-3575
Pacific Spirit Health Centre 604-261-6366
Raven Song Health Centre 604-709-6400
South Health Office 604-321-6151
Three Bridges Health Centre 604-736-9844

Note: Your Community Health Nurse has further information on local resources

Prenatal Class Schedule (updated September 2011)

<p>Healthy Pregnancy Classes Content: <i>Mums only class.</i> Covers nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle choices for pregnancy; screening & diagnostic tests; foetal development; pregnancy discomforts & remedies. Crash Course For Dads occurs on 2nd night of Healthy pregnancy.</p>	<p>2 sessions 2 hours each Cost: \$100* *Included free of charge with weekly series or weekend workshops. Crash Course for Dads \$35 Time: 7:00pm – 9:00pm</p>	<p>Location: <i>Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House</i> 800 East Broadway</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>September</td> <td>W</td> <td>28 Sep & 5 Oct</td> </tr> <tr> <td>November</td> <td>T</td> <td>22 & 29 Nov</td> </tr> <tr> <td>February</td> <td>Th</td> <td>9 & 16 Feb</td> </tr> </table>	September	W	28 Sep & 5 Oct	November	T	22 & 29 Nov	February	Th	9 & 16 Feb						
September	W	28 Sep & 5 Oct															
November	T	22 & 29 Nov															
February	Th	9 & 16 Feb															
<p>Weekly Series Content: Normal labour & birth; relaxation, positions & coping skills for labour; medical pain relief, interventions & procedures; postpartum; breastfeeding; early parenthood; newborn care. Includes handbook and CD.</p>	<p>14 sessions: 7 Evening classes (2hrs ea) 2 Healthy Pregnancy sessions 1 Postpartum Reunion 4 Postpartum Classes (option: 8 additional postpartum classes for \$60 more) Cost: \$300 (\$360 includes full PP series)</p>	<p>Time: 7:00pm – 9:00pm Location: <i>Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House</i> 800 East Broadway</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Mid Autumn</td> <td>W</td> <td>12 Oct - 23 Nov</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Late Autumn</td> <td>Th</td> <td>3 Nov - 15 Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Winter</td> <td>T & Th</td> <td>3 Jan - 24 Jan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mid Winter</td> <td>W</td> <td>11 Jan - 22 Feb</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Late Winter</td> <td>T</td> <td>14 Feb - 27 Mar</td> </tr> </table>	Mid Autumn	W	12 Oct - 23 Nov	Late Autumn	Th	3 Nov - 15 Dec	Winter	T & Th	3 Jan - 24 Jan	Mid Winter	W	11 Jan - 22 Feb	Late Winter	T	14 Feb - 27 Mar
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<p>Weekend Workshops Content: Same as for weekly series; slightly condensed format: breastfeeding not covered, but cost includes Friday or Monday night breastfeeding class. Handbook & CD included.</p>	<p>10 sessions: 2 Weekend days (5hrs ea) 1 Breastfeeding Night 2 Healthy Pregnancy sessions 1 Postpartum Reunion 4 Postpartum Classes (option: 8 additional postpartum classes for \$60 more) Cost: \$300 (\$360 includes full PP series)</p>	<p>Time: Sat & Sun 9am - 2pm OR 3-8pm Monday 7-9pm Location: <i>at instructor's home Victoria & 16th</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>September</td> <td>24 - 26 Sep</td> </tr> <tr> <td>November</td> <td>5 - 7 Nov</td> </tr> <tr> <td>December</td> <td>10 - 12 Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>January</td> <td>14 - 16 Jan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>February</td> <td>11 - 13 Feb</td> </tr> </table>	September	24 - 26 Sep	November	5 - 7 Nov	December	10 - 12 Dec	January	14 - 16 Jan	February	11 - 13 Feb					
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<p>Breastfeeding only Content: Covers breastfeeding basics; troubleshooting; breast pumps & returning to work; special needs; colic</p>	<p>1 session: Friday Night 2 hours Cost: \$50* *Included free of charge with weekend workshop</p>	<p>Time: Monday 7-9pm Location: <i>Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House</i> As above, Monday nights only</p>															
<p>Another Birth: refresher class Content: finding ways to honour this pregnancy and celebrate its distinctness; what worked last time... and what didn't; recalling old birthing techniques and learning new ones; how to prepare your first baby for sibling-hood; connecting with your new baby while maintaining the bond with your 1st.</p>	<p>1 session: Saturday Afternoon 4 hours Cost: \$110* \$90 for Childbearing Grads Time: noon – 4pm</p>	<p>Location: <i>at instructor's home Victoria & 16th</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>November</td> <td>27 November</td> </tr> <tr> <td>January</td> <td>28 January</td> </tr> </table>	November	27 November	January	28 January											
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<p>Breastfeeding Clinics: Content: one-on-one help for those who are experiencing breastfeeding difficulties any time in the first few months after birth.</p>	<p>1 session: Saturday or Sunday 2 hours Cost: \$10 1st session only \$5 if a Weekly Series or Weekend Workshop has been taken</p>	<p>Time: 3-5pm Location: <i>at instructor's home Victoria & 16th</i></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>15 Oct</td> <td>19 Nov</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19 Nov</td> <td>18 Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>29 Jan</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	15 Oct	19 Nov	19 Nov	18 Dec	29 Jan										
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<p>Postpartum Classes Content: <i>For parents with babies who are not yet walking.</i> Covers infant feeding, sleep, safety, colic & crying, attachment, and infant development, and many other topics.</p>	<p>12 sessions: 1 ½ hours each Cost: \$150* *Free for expectant parents enrolled in prenatal classes; 4 sessions included free with prenatal class series. Time: 12:30 - 2 pm</p>	<p>Location: <i>Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House</i> 800 East Broadway</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>September</td> <td>W</td> <td>7 - 28 Sep</td> </tr> <tr> <td>October</td> <td>T</td> <td>4 - 25 Oct</td> </tr> <tr> <td>November</td> <td>T</td> <td>1 - 22 Nov</td> </tr> <tr> <td>January</td> <td>T</td> <td>3 - 24 Jan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>February</td> <td>T</td> <td>7 - 28 Feb</td> </tr> </table>	September	W	7 - 28 Sep	October	T	4 - 25 Oct	November	T	1 - 22 Nov	January	T	3 - 24 Jan	February	T	7 - 28 Feb
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<p>Private Classes Cost: \$20 + \$50/hour Minimum 2 hours. Does not include materials (optional: \$25)</p>	<p>To register, or for more information: (604) 878-1031 www.childbearing.org Low income rates available.</p>	<p>The Childbearing Society's instructors, all health professionals with a passion for the childbearing year, add their extensive training on pregnancy, birth, and parenting to their personal experience. Annual recertification, along with reading, conferences, and continuing education ensure our teachers are fully up-to-date in their fields. Our instructors love what they do, and look forward to sharing their expertise with you.</p>															