

DEAR FUTURE  
MAMA



# DEAR FUTURE MAMA

A TMI Guide to Pregnancy, Birth, and  
New Motherhood from Your Bestie

Meghan Trainor



HARPER HORIZON

*Dear Future Mama*

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*For Riley, who made me a mom.  
For my mom, who showed me how it's done.  
And for Daryl, who makes my life complete.*



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# DEAR FUTURE MAMA

Dear Future Mama,

I'm full-on obsessed with pregnancy in all its weird, painful, messy glory. I'm the friend (wanna be friends?) who wants to know when and how you started trying, what multivitamin you're on, when you got the positive test, when you felt your first kick . . . and how it felt to poop for the first time after baby. It doesn't matter how crazy you were in college or how many things you've already crossed off your bucket list—this experience is going to be the wildest thing you've ever done. Your body is doing amazing, beautiful, and very strange things right now. For example: giving you intense heartburn when all you've eaten is one plain, tasteless cracker, or sending shooting pain from your hip to your leg, or making your hair extra luscious but also giving you terrible acne. Maybe your gums are bleeding, or your hips hurt, or for some reason only your right armpit is sweating. While you sleep, or eat, or go to work, your entire body is basically 3D-printing a human being.

I spent my entire pregnancy trying to get all the information I could possibly get, mostly by watching hours of YouTube—so much

## DEAR FUTURE MAMA

that my husband, Daryl, threatened to delete the app from all my devices. I couldn't help it; I was fascinated by what I was experiencing, and as the first of my friends to be pregnant, nobody around me but my mom, my aunts, and strangers on the internet knew what I was going through. And because my mom and my aunts kept saying, "Meghan, that was decades ago, you think I remember?" moms on YouTube became my imaginary besties.

My friends couldn't relate to aching boobs or weird dreams or feeling like a baby was trying to escape through my ribs, but they heard about it anyway because they're good friends and because I was going to tell them whether they liked it or not. Sure, they thought I was crazy sometimes (and cringed when I shared the grosser details), but they also told me that everything I shared with them helped them feel a lot less nervous about having their own babies someday.

That's exactly what I hope this book does for you! Pregnancy can be exciting and scary, confusing and a little lonely, even when you're surrounded by love. I want to keep it real without freaking you out, make you laugh and shout "OMG, *same!*" I want to make sure you know the most important things every mama needs to know: that you're enough, that you're made for this, and that you are the perfect mama that this baby has been waiting for.

So read this book like it's just the two of us, hanging out talking about what the fuck is going on in our uterus, because I gotchu, queen.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meghan Trainor' in a stylized, cursive script.

# INTRODUCTION

I was twelve years old and absolutely not planning to witness my first birth *and* see my aunt's vagina, but sometimes these things just happen.

My mom's little sister, Lisa, is ten years younger than her and always felt more like my big sister than my aunt. She'd already been in labor with her first baby for hours, and my mom let me tag along to the hospital, where we planned to pass the time in the waiting room until my new cousin arrived.

Even as a kid, I knew that motherhood was my destiny. I grew up with more baby dolls than Barbie dolls, and I treated these dolls like they were actual babies with personalities and preferences. Even after I outgrew the baby dolls and started singing and writing my own music, I knew that what I wanted to be when I grew up was an international recording artist . . . and a mom. Blame my mom, Kelli—she's perfect, seriously. She's the most selfless person I know. My entire childhood, she made motherhood look *fun*, even when my brothers and I drove her crazy. I didn't want to be just any mom, I wanted to be a mom like *her*: the kind of mom who played hide-and-seek, who went trick-or-treating even when it was freezing cold, who told her kids to roll down the car

## INTRODUCTION

windows and “scream it out” to let off steam, and who gave “lay-down time” to all three of her kids every single night, rubbing our backs for what felt like hours just so we could fall asleep feeling safe and loved.

I was in seventh grade and was as excited as anyone in our family about my aunt’s new baby. I couldn’t *wait* to meet him, but waiting is exactly what you do in the waiting room, and nobody knew how long it would take. When Lisa’s husband—my uncle Burton—came out to see us, he looked exhausted. The contractions seemed to have stopped, he told us. Did we want to go in and say hello?

In the hospital room, my aunt *did* look exhausted. But she also looked beautiful, with her hair all messy and her skin glowing with sweat. “Hi, Meghan!” she said with a smile, and then . . . she was screaming bloody murder. A contraction had started, and my mother grabbed her little sister’s hand and didn’t let go. Nurses I hadn’t even noticed surrounded the bed, and everyone seemed to forget I was there. I didn’t want to leave, but I didn’t know whether I could stay. Luckily, Lisa noticed I was still there, fear and excitement on my face.

“Meghan’s still here?!” she shouted, and my mom looked up, surprised. I nodded to her, hoping she wouldn’t send me back out into the waiting room.

“Meghan,” Mom said, “you can stay. But you’re going to need to mature real fast. You’re going to see *everything*. Only stay in this room if you can handle that, promise?”

“I promise,” I said, and I stepped up beside my aunt’s bed to hold her other hand. I’m pretty sure that the rest of my friends spent their weekend watching TV, but I was a child doula helping my aunt give birth . . . and I was loving it. When the nurses told her it was time to push, Uncle Burton looked like he was about to pass out, so my mom and I each held one of Lisa’s legs and counted down from ten, screaming “Pusssshhhhh!” when we hit one.

My mom wasn’t lying; I saw *everything*. I saw a doctor put his fingers in my aunt’s vagina when the contractions were getting closer

together; I saw the crazy look in her eye when the doctor told her to push harder; I saw what came out of her when she started pushing . . . and it wasn't just a baby.

"You're doing great!" I screamed, even though I had no way of knowing if that was true. "Let's get this baby out of you!"

I saw the top of baby Marcus's head starting to emerge, and I couldn't believe what I was witnessing. Lisa's entire body was transforming and shifting and expanding to push out a brand-new person. She was amazing; this *experience* was amazing. And when Marcus finally squeezed out (I'm sorry, but it's really the only word for it), I felt . . . terrible. His face was squished, and he had a conehead. All that work, and my aunt had a little alien? Seeing my face and reading my mind, a nurse told me that this is what all babies look like at first, and soon my cousin would be cute. Marcus was already pressed against my aunt's bare chest, and she was crying into his head. A long, alien-like umbilical cord pressed between them, pulsating.

The doctor asked Lisa's husband if he wanted to cut the cord, but he shook his head, so the doctor *passed me the giant scissors*. I was so excited, I started imagining my future career as a nurse. Maybe other kids would have been freaked out, but I was honored and humbled by the entire experience, so much so that I showed up to do the same thing *on purpose* when Lisa had another baby a few years later. And even though I'd seen her do it before, it was me who cried when she delivered her next child.

I'm sure my parents were convinced I was destined to be a doula or a teen mom (no shade—that's one of the best reality shows of all time), but I was never in a hurry to be a mother; I just knew it was waiting for me, on the other side of some invisible door. I didn't know that it was possible to miss people you haven't met yet, but by my twenties I longed for my children. If you ever saw me in Target crying at the sight of diapers when I was just twenty-two, I'm sorry if I ruined your shopping trip. Personally, I thought I was crazy.

## INTRODUCTION

“Why am I crying about diapers when I don’t even have a husband yet?” I asked my therapist, preparing to be told I was in the midst of losing my mind.

“Because you’re already mothering your future children,” she told me, with absolutely zero judgment.

Isn’t that beautiful? I wasn’t weird; I was *mothering*. This was already a part of my identity, and I didn’t need to be ashamed of it just because I was young and only dreaming about my future. That acceptance meant that when I met my now-husband, Daryl, I wasn’t afraid to tell him what I wanted: marriage, kids, and a family. I wrote a song called “Marry Me” one month into dating him and sang it to him in our hotel room while I was on tour. A tad aggressive, sure, but I walked down the aisle to that same song.

As I write this, I’m mothering a very real baby named Riley. He has my eyes and his dad’s red hair, and he has both our hearts clenched in his little, powerful hands. (He’s also pulled out a lot of my hair, but we’ll get to that later.)

## MEET TEAM MAMA

I'm a lot of things in the world, but I'm not a doctor, a registered dietitian, a personal trainer, or a doula. But because I have access to the best of the best—and because I love you so much, bestie—I pulled together the women who have been with me through every step of my own motherhood journey to bring their expertise to you.

### REBECCA STANTON

 @rebeccabroxfit

The first word that comes to mind with Rebecca is *badass*. I was *not* in the best shape of my life when I got pregnant, but Rebecca has helped me stay healthy through pregnancy, birth, and early motherhood. Rebecca spent years as a dancer in her hometown of Topeka, Kansas, before moving to Los Angeles and making the transition into personal training. With Rebecca, fitness is about far more than just looks: she encourages all her clients to “be inspired to inspire,” to think about health more than appearances, and to appreciate our bodies for

everything they do for us. Rebecca is certified by the National Academy of Sports Medicine and holds prenatal and postpartum certifications. She's guided several clients safely through pregnancy, encouraging them to love and nourish their bodies before, during, and after giving birth.

## KRISTY MORRELL, RD

Don't let the *dietitian* title scare you; Kristy isn't the kind of person who makes you give up every food you love in the name of health. If she did, I wouldn't be working with her! Kristy worked as a sports dietitian for the University of Southern California and the Los Angeles Kings, educating athletes on proper nutrition to enhance performance, and is currently in private practice specializing in eating disorders, sports performance, weight management, and the impact of dietary habits. Kristy is a mama of two boys, and her passion is helping people change their relationship with food: no fads, no diets, no gimmicks. She believes in listening to *and* appreciating your body. See why I love her?

## DR. KARYN SOLKY, OB-GYN

Dr. Solky is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and the UCLA School of Medicine, and is an attending physician at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center here in LA. She's also a legend, the doctor's doctor, and the woman who showed me that there was hope. Dr. Solky was my *second* gyno and took me on as a patient halfway through my pregnancy. She raised the bar on the standard of care (which I didn't realize I deserved). She listened to every ridiculous question and answered kindly and thoroughly. She told me tough news so calmly—and with a



smile—that I didn’t even realize it wasn’t the best news. From the first appointment, I felt like we’d been friends for years, and now . . . well, she’s stuck with me forever.

## DARYL SABARA

Yes, I married the kid from *Spy Kids*, and yes, he lives up to every lyric in “Dear Future Husband.” I swear he’s better than anything I could have ever dreamed of, and I dream *big*. He’s perfect for me in every way, but he set the bar *high* for how a partner should show up in pregnancy—to the point where my friends have asked him to do a master class about it. He’ll pop up in this book from time to time to give his perspective.

## MAMA’S RULES

I know from experience that motherhood is a team sport. And every sport has rules, right? I’d like to set some for us right now. Raise your right hand and repeat after me (not for reals, but you can if you want):

1. **Mamas don’t judge one another.** Unless you see a mother putting her baby in danger or breaking a law, let’s cool it on the mom judgment. This experience is hard enough without wondering if our friends are gossiping about whether we’re cloth diapering or using disposables. (TBH I did not have the time, energy, or interest in rinsing feces out of a piece of wet cotton, but I give a standing ovation to every parent who chooses this for their kid.)
2. **Mamas don’t judge themselves.** This is the hardest rule and the most serious one. You’re doing something you’ve never done before, and I *insist* you become your biggest fan.

3. **Mama knows best.** All the information out there can have your head swimming. Remember that you are the leading expert on yourself, even when you're doing something you've never done before. If something doesn't feel right to you, it probably isn't right. Believe in yourself. You got this.
4. **Mama does her best** (and has the right to change her mind). We do the best we can with what we know at the time, and every day we learn more about ourselves and our babies. It is normal and totally acceptable to change your mind about *anything* related to this journey (just check with your doctor first).

—— PART ONE ——

# TRIMESTER ONE



## LET'S GET PREGNANT

I spent the better part of my twenties wanting to have a family and also making sure I didn't get pregnant. I had a crazy career, I had a busy life, and, most importantly, I wanted to have kids with the right person, at the right time. Pregnancy seemed like an option that I could just turn on like preferences in an app. Who am I, Gen Z? Well, I *do* manifest like Gen Z. I'm the girl who wrote "Dear Future Husband" just to make sure that wherever he was, he knew my criteria for applying to be the Love of My Life. I've always known exactly what I wanted, and so did Daryl. But before he met me, he didn't think he'd ever get married, and he didn't even know if he wanted kids.

How I met Daryl is one of my favorite stories to tell, and it's even better when we tell it together because he'll pop in with details he thinks I forgot. (I didn't forget, babe. I was just moving the story along.) I was eighteen years old when we met, just a little baby songwriter invited to a party at a fancy house in the Hollywood Hills. I was visiting LA for work, feeling like the coolest person in the world, when the party got crashed. A bunch of guys walked in, and I heard people whispering that one of the guys was Juni from *Spy Kids*. *Oh. My. God.* I was immediately

*starstruck*, y'all. So I did what my eighteen-year-old brain told me was the cool thing to do: I walked up to him and said, "Are you Spy Kids?" That's legit how I said it: "Are you Spy Kids?" Not "Are you Juni from *Spy Kids*?" He laughed, and he nodded, and when I went home that night, I replayed our cringey interaction and prayed he would forget it.

## Daryl Says

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Of course I hadn't forgotten! Meghan is unforgettable. And even though I used to hate when people did this, she was cute, so I really didn't mind.

---

Three years later, my career had blown up, and I was having the time of my life. But I'm a hopeless romantic, and I would stay up at night writing love songs and hoping like a Disney princess that true love would find me. My dad always told me, "If you stop obsessing over it, *that's* when love will find you." But that was impossible for me. I could never not think about it. I was on the hunt. I was twenty-one years old and acting like I'd been waiting for ages, but again, I am impatient, so I asked my friend Chloe Grace Moretz if she knew anyone who was cute and sweet, and she lit up. She told me that her best friend was the cutest, sweetest guy she'd ever met, that he was totally perfect. His name was Daryl, and he played Juni in *Spy Kids*.

Y'all. What are the chances?

She then set us up a double date with her and her boyfriend at the time, and then I prayed that in the three years that had passed since we last met, he'd forgotten that I was the girl who called him "Spy Kids."

He had not.

I Snapchatted him right before our date and asked him if he remembered, and when he typed back "Of course I remember," I was mortified. I thought he might cancel the date. Nope.

A few days later we were on our first date. Six days later we said “I love you,” and five days after *that* I left on tour . . . and Daryl came with. From day one we were inseparable, and things just made sense. Just before we were set up on our first date, I’d written one of those hopelessly romantic songs of mine, called—wait for it—“Hopeless Romantic.”

*Bet we met at a party before  
You were sweet and held open the door  
Oh my, I should’ve said hi  
So if you’re out there  
And hearing this song  
Just know I’m here  
And you’re taking too long*

I did not know when I wrote those lyrics that my future husband would be a *guy I met at a party before!* It was clearly meant to be, and Daryl felt the same way, which was surprising because he’d never seen himself as the marrying kind.

It was the second show date of the tour—day twelve of dating, to be exact—when he looked at me and said, “I never saw myself getting married or having kids . . . until I met you. I love you and I really see myself growing old with you.”

I barked back at him, “You wanna marry me?!” I’m pretty sure I did the whole song and dance that Sandra Bullock does in *Miss Congeniality* when Benjamin Bratt falls in love with her (great movie, BTW). I was excited and cheesing, and then I sat down and wrote “Marry Me.” Was this quick? Yep, but it made total sense to me: of course we loved each other, and of course we’d have a million babies. Or at least three to six babies. Daryl currently wants three or five, but I don’t know about an uneven number.

Wanting kids is one of those things a lot of people wouldn’t bring up in the early stages of dating, but those people aren’t me. If Daryl

hadn't brought it up that quickly, I would have. I feel like it's better to have your real wants and needs out in the open so you know early on whether this potential partner can meet them. If you don't want the same things in life, it's not the right person for you. It wouldn't have mattered how magical those first eleven days had been; if Daryl had looked me in the eye and told me he loved me but he didn't want kids? It would have been a deal breaker for me.

Now, people have a lot of opinions about when you should have kids. Have them too young and you're irresponsible. Wait too long and you're selfish. People love to let you know that the clock is ticking and time could run out.

Daryl and I got married on my twenty-fifth birthday. He was twenty-six years old, and people told us to wait a few years before having kids. A few years felt like a really long time, but my career was busy, and I was always working and traveling. Our life felt like a revolving door of hopping from a car to a plane to a new stage in a new city. I'm not complaining—I love my job. But in those chaotic days I didn't see how I could do it with a giant belly or swollen ankles, or how we'd lug around a baby stroller. Everyone who knew me knew that I wanted babies . . . ASAP. Knowing my mom had kids at twenty-four might have been a part of this, but I had to remind myself that she had a forty-three-year-old husband and their clock actually was ticking. My work supports a whole team of people, but to their credit they always told me that whenever I was ready to have kids, they'd be ready to support me.

And then, COVID-19 happened. There were no more shows and no more travel. Like a lot of people, we thought it would last a few weeks, maybe a few months. But when it became clear we weren't "going back to normal" any time soon, we took it as a sign that maybe it was time to try. If I had bad morning sickness or a complicated pregnancy, I wouldn't have to worry about traveling for work. We weren't going anywhere, so we wouldn't have to worry about paparazzi leaking the news. And besides, what else was there for two newlyweds to do once



we'd watched everything on Netflix? We were home, we weren't going anywhere, and we'd made it a year and a half into our marriage. It was time to try. And time for my *obsession* to begin.

## Doctor's Note

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### I'm Ready to Be a Mom. Now What?

I'm Dr. Solky, and I have the best job in the world. As an obstetrician-gynecologist (ob-gyn), I've spent my entire career caring for women through all stages of life. It's an honor to be a part of my patients' best and worst moments and to see them through so many life milestones. One of my favorite parts of my job is obstetrics—caring for pregnant women—and guiding my patients through the process of becoming mothers.

It's never too soon to talk to your provider; it gives us the chance to address any potential issues before they become urgent. Before conception, my patients and I go through their health history to make sure they're not on any medications that could be unsafe for a baby and that any underlying medical conditions that could affect their pregnancy are monitored and managed as well as possible. We also check their vaccinations; while you're pregnant, there are some vaccines you can't receive for diseases that you might have naturally lost immunity to over the years, so we'll want to make sure those are up-to-date. We'll also do a carrier screening for a panel of genetic disorders to make sure that mom isn't a carrier. If she is, we'll screen the partner. It sounds scary, but it's always best to make informed decisions about your family planning and to be able to address any issues before they become urgent.



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I don't know what kind of an education you all got in high school, but I was told that penis plus vagina equals baby. Until the day I saw my cousin's gremlin face emerging from my aunt's vag, I hadn't really thought about how any of it . . . happened. When you're young, pregnancy seems like a thing that just *happens*. The internet is filled with advice on how to get pregnant: you can find entire diet plans, yoga moves, superstitions, spells, prayers, medical procedures, conspiracy theories, tests . . . it's easy to get overwhelmed. That's exactly what I did: I spent literal days watching YouTube and TikTok and Instagram videos of pregnant women telling the world what they did to get knocked up.

No, really, *every day* I searched "how to get pregnant" on YouTube and did whatever these random women told me to do. I was willing to try anything and made getting pregnant our job. Look, we do the best we can in the moment, but if I *could* go back in time? I'd tell myself to *chill*. We were having sex three times a day. Wake up: sex. A small break from work: sex. After dinner: sex. I love my husband and we had some good times, but I wasn't being very romantic. Let me tell you, nothing takes the sexiness out of sex like giving it a mission and making it an item on your to-do list.

Wait, there's one more thing that probably doesn't help: putting a menstrual cup inside yourself after sex to keep the sperm in longer. Yeah, I did that. I did that because a YouTuber said it "may" have worked for her . . . sad. Disclaimer: I am not suggesting you take medical advice from a YouTuber! But anyone who knows me knows I'm the most impatient person ever. So I was willing to try *anything*.

## Daryl Says

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Look, I love my wife very much and had *no* problem "trying" three times a day. What most people don't know is that when Meghan wants to achieve something, she obsesses over it until it happens.

She's not just "impatient"—she's the most impatient person I've ever met. That's an incredible quality . . . most of the time. It's part of what has made her so successful, and it's definitely one of the millions of reasons why I love her so much. She's a boss. But did I want a boss to tell me it was time to "perform" in the middle of a workday because she saw a YouTube video that told her to try a different position? Not really.

---

Meanwhile, it felt like I was watching everyone in the world *except* me get pregnant. Every announcement brought me happiness for the couple and frustration for me and my husband. All this research meant that I was slowly becoming a scientist with a degree from the University of Google. I knew in my head that pregnancy meant a series of biological dominoes all had to fall into place: the egg releasing, the right sperm breaking out from the pack, the fertilized egg implanting into your uterus and not getting stuck in a fallopian tube or just drifting out in your next period. When you think about it—*really* think about it—it's amazing that any of us are here at all, that all those microscopic events happened at the right time and right place . . . and made a person. Everyone on this Earth—even the really annoying people you can't stand—is a damn miracle. But in my heart I just thought, *Okay, so where is our miracle?* I popped my prenatal vitamins and spent thirty minutes after sex lying on my back with my legs up the wall while playing my Nintendo and hoping for the best.

I knew that it could take time to get pregnant, but as I've said, I have a patience problem, and I was freaking out after just two months of negative pregnancy tests. I know, I know, *chill*. But have you ever tried telling a woman who wants to be pregnant to *chill*? I wouldn't recommend it, especially after she gets her period. I swear, the period goes from being a minor inconvenience to the biggest "fuck you."

So I was in a mood; I was impatient. Where did I go? Back to

YouTube for more “tips on getting pregnant.” A few clicks in, I found myself watching a segment from a TV show about getting pregnant. I was ready to hear some tips . . . and not ready to hear about how we were doing it wrong. The show suggested that we were having *too much sex* and not giving Daryl’s body time to make more sperm. This, it turns out, might not actually be scientifically proven,<sup>1</sup> but either way, I didn’t appreciate a scientist telling me that we were doing it wrong. Not sex itself—we’re good at that—but we weren’t having *fun*. We were stressed out and acting like it was a job, when really, we were taking the very first steps toward building a family.

Here’s what I needed to focus on: *my body*. When it came down to it, pregnancy is just science. Crazy science. Listen: A tiny, microscopic egg is released from the fallopian tube and the clock starts ticking. It has twelve to twenty-four hours to be fertilized. To fertilize the egg, sperm have to go on a vicious *journey*, and of all the millions that should be in a single shot of sperm, just *one* is all it takes. I don’t know how you’d even try to write out a math equation for your chances of getting pregnant, but that’s crazy, right? Then I read that while your eggs just have that little window, sperm *can* live inside you for up to five days after sex *in the right conditions*.<sup>2</sup> What are those conditions? Don’t ask me, because when I first heard that, I wasn’t taking any chances. The way I acted, the window was always open and baby-making was a full-time job.

But not anymore: I ordered a box of ovulation testers and told Daryl we had a new plan: no sex. He was . . . confused. How would we make a baby without sex? Well, we’d *have* sex . . . in fourteen days, when and if I ovulated. He was sweet—he’s always so sweet—and nodded along while I told him that every morning I would pee on one of these tests and wait for a smiley face to tell me I was ovulating. No smiley face? No sex. Was he super pumped about this new plan? No, not really, but he was a brave guy, and he survived.

And the morning I saw that smiley face, I jumped back in bed with Daryl and made it count.

## Daryl Says

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Okay, this is when I really wanted to block her access to YouTube. But here's what future dads need to know: your wife/girlfriend/partner is going through a *lot* right now. It might not all be rational, but it's very emotional, and your job here is to be supportive, be a good listener . . . and yeah, wait two little weeks for sex if that's what she wants. She's carrying your baby for *nine months*! You can do two weeks. I recommend meditation, breath work, and as many distractions as possible.

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## AND NOW . . . WE WAIT

There's an excruciating part of getting pregnant you need to know about: the Two-Week Wait. Not the two weeks I made Daryl wait to have sex, but—you guessed it—the two weeks between ovulation and implantation, fourteen days for you to wonder whether a sperm found an egg and whether that fertilized egg has found a place in your uterus. The only way to tell it worked is for your body to build up enough of the pregnancy hormone beta-hCG that it can be detected in blood or pee. And while you're waiting . . . you just get to obsess over it.

My mom thought I was crazy counting down the days and obsessing over every little twinge that could have been implantation, but my YouTube besties? They got me. I spent the full two weeks watching YouTube videos to try to figure out what I was supposed to be feeling. Calm, beautiful women would look into the camera and whisper-talk, like, "Girl, if you're waiting . . . listen to your body." I tried! I spent the two-week wait feeling like everything my body did was a sign, but not a sign that I could read. Was that implantation I felt in my belly, or just a fart coming? Were my breasts tender because I was pregnant or

because I was about to have my period? What about not feeling anything at all? Was that bad, or *was even that a symptom?*

### IS IT PREGNANCY OR YOUR PERIOD?

Sore boobs

Cramps

Fatigue

Feeling emotional

Bloating

Light spotting

Trick question. It could be either! What a hilarious nightmare!

My boobs felt like . . . boobs. My body felt like . . . a body. The only difference this month was that I had zero symptoms (which convinced me that I was *definitely* not pregnant this time).

The morning that marked two weeks, I tried to play it cool and distract myself. We woke up and went on a hike to celebrate my friend Tommy's birthday. It's one of our favorite hikes, with a gradual incline and a winding path that tricks you into thinking you're just on a walk—until you see all of Los Angeles spread out below you. We were in the thick of the pandemic, so this was the best birthday celebration we could come up with, and I was excited to finally get out of the house. But from the minute we stepped on the trail, I was *winded*. I'm always winded while going up steep hills or any staircase, but this was different. I was dangling off my husband, trying to fight gravity. I felt like crap, and I *knew* I was about to get my period. I didn't have any pregnancy symptoms, and I'd have to tell Daryl *again* that it hadn't worked.

When we got home, I was hot and sweaty and definitely in a mood. I was certain I started my period on this brutal hike. But when I got home and went to the bathroom, I saw no blood. I decided I *had* to take a pregnancy test before my shower. You know, just to prove to myself I wasn't pregnant. Mind you, I wasn't days late. I wasn't even *hours* late. If I really thought I was pregnant, I would've filmed this moment and would've waited till I wasn't a hot, sweaty mess.

"I don't know why I'm doing this," I said to Daryl while I was peeing on the stick. "I don't have any symptoms. It's just going to say *not pregnant* and then I'll be depressed and cramping all day."

I stepped into the shower to turn it on and feel sorry for myself, feeling the water heat up as it ran over my hands. Meanwhile, Daryl was staring at the test I'd left on the counter. When I turned, he had the biggest smile I'd ever seen. This is the moment I'll remember forever, because it's so perfectly us: Daryl said, "You're *pregnant!*" And without missing a beat, I shouted, "*No fucking way!*" I was laughing, and I was crumpling, sweaty and naked and collapsing into my husband's arms while we cried tears of joy.

## Daryl Says

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After all her hard work, it felt unfair that I saw it first. But it's one of the best moments of my life, and I'll cherish it forever. Third time's the charm!

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## PRE-PREGNANCY CHECKLIST

I love to be prepared, even if it means derailing a meeting so I can make sure everyone on the team knows the newest “fun fact” about pregnancy that is really only fun to me. We started trying during the COVID-19 pandemic, when everything was scary and uncertain. Looking at the news or Twitter was like being hit with a fire hose of stress and fear, and I was lucky enough to be physically safe and still have work, even if I was stuck at home. All the research I was doing on pregnancy is a part of my personality for sure, but it was also a way to calm my anxious brain: the more information I have, the more control I feel over a situation, even when a situation is totally out of my control.

I am always the first person to a meeting, I deep-dive down rabbit holes whenever I’m interested in something, and I *love* a to-do list. The following list is not the be-all and end-all, and there is a lot on this list that I didn’t think about until after the fact, or didn’t *need* to think about . . . but you might. Every family and situation is unique, so use this as a jumping-off point while you plan for your future as a family.

## TALK TO YOUR PARTNER

I mean, duh. But there's a lot to talk about once you've both agreed that you want to have kids. When do you want to officially try? What is your plan in the event of infertility? Are you open to medical assistance to help you conceive? Nobody wants to think about that last one, but having the conversation before you need to is going to make a potentially devastating situation at least a *bit* easier.

## INTERVIEW YOUR FAMILY

Okay, this sounds serious, but ask your parents about any family history with pregnancy loss or birth defects. These are questions your provider will ask you, too, so it's good to be prepared.

## EVALUATE YOUR BUDGET

Everyone tells you babies are expensive, but pregnancy can be too. Even if you have great insurance, you're going to have out-of-pocket expenses. Those co-pays can add up! So can maternity clothes, vitamins, childcare costs, and all the gear you'll eventually need for this new baby (more on that in the third trimester). Even if you plan your budget down to the penny, things always come up. Some might be little, but the thing about complications is that they're unexpected. A friend of mine is a waitress whose morning sickness was really just all-the-time sickness, and she ended up needing to have four teeth pulled unexpectedly as a result. That's not cheap and nothing she could have planned for. Another friend of mine started putting away the average weekly day care cost in her city *right when she got pregnant*. By the time the baby arrived, they had almost a year's worth of day care costs covered. I'm not

saying you have to go *that* crazy, but having a handle on your monthly income and expenses before you throw a baby into the works is *crucial*.

## CHECK YOUR LEAVE POLICY AT WORK

America is *way* behind the rest of the world on parental leave. While our Canadian friends get a full year off to care for a new child, Americans are considered lucky if they're eligible for the Family and Medical Leave Act, which gives *eligible employees* twelve weeks of parental leave (unpaid).<sup>1</sup> Another option is to take six weeks of short-term disability at about 60 percent pay.<sup>2</sup>

It's bad, and we gotta change it, but in the meantime, you need to make sure you're fully aware of what your employer does—and does not—provide. Some smaller employers may not have parental coverage at all.

Check your benefits paperwork to make sure your plan covers maternity care and to find out the details of any parental leave policy. If this isn't clearly spelled out in writing somewhere, reach out to your HR person (or your boss) and ask: What benefits do we provide for pregnant women in this company?

Mamas, this is important: your employer cannot use a pregnancy (or your desire to get pregnant) as a reason to fire you, deny you a promotion, or affect your job in any way.<sup>3</sup> I was nervous to tell my team about my pregnancy, and I'm the boss! I can only imagine how nerve-racking it would be if you aren't in a supportive environment, so remember that you do have rights. Your employer can't ask if you're pregnant, if you're trying to get pregnant, or anything like that. Your body, your business!

## CALL YOUR INSURANCE

As I said, having a baby isn't cheap, even without medical complications. Ask your insurance provider:

- What appointments are covered? At what percentage?
- What is my out-of-pocket maximum?
- What providers are in-network?
- What kind of coverage do I have if there are complications?
- Does the plan cover childbirth classes? A breast pump?
- What are my deductible and co-pay amounts for maternal care?
- Are my doctor and birth facility covered by the plan?
- Post-delivery, how long am I covered for a hospital stay?
- In the event of birth complications, how does that coverage change?
- When and how do I add my baby to the health plan?
- Does the plan cover certified nurse midwives and nonhospital birth centers or a home birth? (It's a hard pass for me, but shout-out to all my home-birthing mama friends!)

## LEARN YOUR CYCLE

I was a late bloomer here, so learn from me: learn about your body. I've heard a lot of moms rave about *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler, but I used apps (and there are a lot of them). Before you sign up to share your cycle and pregnancy data with any app, review the privacy policies to confirm that they don't share your personal data with any third parties and that you understand what you're signing up for. However you learn it, knowing how regular your cycle is, when you're ovulating, and the best times for you to "try" is crucial.

## TAKE PRENATAL SUPPLEMENTS

Your body needs iron to support a fetus and a placenta and folic acid to help your baby's brain and spinal cord develop. I started taking

supplements months before I even tried to get pregnant because they do amazing things for your hair and your nails. Plus, they come in gummy form now (*yum*), so you don't have to swallow a pill.

## Keep It Moving with Rebecca

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Women are hard on ourselves (shocking, I know!), especially when trying to conceive. We want to get everything right, and I get that. Now's the time to start building endurance and strength for the physically demanding road ahead. I suggest a yoga class (not hot yoga!) to help relax your mind and strengthen your body. And I know nobody wants to hear this, but stressing out will not help you get pregnant, so if you can already feel your stress level rising, it's time to try some meditation or gentle movement (a walk is great!).

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## GO TO THE DENTIST

Apparently, all these changes affect your *whole* body, including your teeth and gums?! Keep those choppers healthy, mama.

## CALL THE MIDWIFE. OR THE OB . . . OR THE DOULA . . . OR DON'T. NO PRESSURE, SERIOUSLY.

Choosing your care team for your pregnancy is very personal. Like, *very* personal. These people are going to be seeing parts of you that you haven't even seen, and ensuring you're in the right set of hands is crucial to feeling safe and supported during your pregnancy. I went with an obstetrician (OB), but I have mama friends who swear by their

doula or their midwife. There are entire *books* dedicated to these professions, but I thought a li'l cheat sheet might be helpful while you're in the planning stages.

	Who They Are	What They Do	Their Qualifications	When to Call Them
Ob-gyn	An obstetrician-gynecologist is a medical doctor who specializes in women's reproductive health.	An ob-gyn cares for your health during the pregnancy and also delivers the baby. They're the doctor you see for your yearly gynecological visit, which I hope you never skip (though yes . . . I have).	They've been alllll the way through medical school and three to seven years in internships and residencies.	Well, hopefully you already have. But schedule an appointment when you're ready to try to get pregnant to talk about any preexisting conditions, your current medications, and any concerns you might have. Did I do this? Nope! I just dove right in.
Midwife	This sounds very old-timey, but certified nurse midwives are modern medical professionals who specialize in women's health care. <sup>4</sup>	Depending on the state, they provide care from gynecological exams to family planning to labor and delivery (but not C-sections). They aren't doctors, but many of them practice under a doctor's supervision or consult with an ob-gyn.	Certified nurse midwives have graduated from a certified nurse midwifery program and have passed a national exam.	Midwives typically serve women who are low-risk and want fewer medical interventions, or options like a home or water birth. You can see a midwife for a pre-pregnancy check-in or meet with one once you're knocked up.

## PRE-PREGNANCY CHECKLIST

<b>Doula</b> (sometimes called a <i>birth coach</i> )	If you're a crunchy mama who wants to avoid being induced and do it all naturally . . . man, good for you. Your doula is your coach, your advocate, and a teammate for you <i>and</i> your partner.	A doula is your personal guide for the emotional <i>and</i> physical parts of the pregnancy journey and beyond. Many of them also provide hands-on follow-up care when you and baby get home. Lots of people use a doula even with an ob-gyn or a midwife, as an extra support person and advocate during the birth process.	A doula is not usually a medical professional, but they should be certified through an organization like DONA International.	Interview doulas when you're pregnant. You can find certified doulas at DONA.org or through word of mouth (from people you trust, not randoms!).
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If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a breath. Then take another. Now smile and say, "Wow, I'm stunning." You don't have to have it all figured out right now, or even before the baby comes. Also, whenever I thought I was unprepared or doing things wrong, I'd remember that our eighty-year-old family friend was told *by her doctor* to smoke when she was pregnant to "keep her weight down" and "have small babies." At least we aren't doing that, right? For real, though, you can't be smoking or vaping or drinking alcohol or anything once you're pregnant; it's not the 1950s anymore and that shit's bad for your baby.





## I'M PREGNANT (I THINK)

Here's something that makes zero sense: your first trimester of pregnancy starts the first day of your *last* period. About five minutes after Daryl told me I was pregnant, I was back on my phone, downloading every single pregnancy app available on an iPhone. For real, every pregnancy app was on my phone, and I refreshed them all religiously, as though there would be breaking news on what was happening in my uterus . . . from an app downloaded by literally millions of people. I even downloaded them all on Daryl's phone too. I opened those apps all day long as if new information would magically pop up. But I did learn some things, like that I couldn't have sushi anymore (bummer) and that I was somehow already two weeks pregnant even though the test was still wet.

I also learned my due date: February 14. We didn't plan it, but yeah, we made a Valentine's Day love child and yes, it went straight to my head. I told everyone, "It's because Daryl and I are soulmates," and left out the fact that I'd also learned that a "due date" is really just a guesstimate and not the day your baby will actually pop into the world.

I called my doctor right away, because obviously I needed to get in

there—I was pregnant! But here’s the thing: your first appointment is usually about eight weeks after your last period. I had six weeks to go (or so they said—you know I pushed for an earlier appointment), and I wanted all the information I could find, and fast. What was I going to feel? What was happening? And most importantly, was I actually pregnant? I didn’t *feel* pregnant! Also, I was *dying* to know whether there was a tiny little blonde diva floating inside me or an itty-bitty Spy Kid. I typed in the date of my last period and was told our baby was . . . a poppy seed? Really? A microscopic poppy seed? I scrolled forward to find out that in a week, our baby would be the size of a sesame seed. It would take weeks, apparently, for this baby to grow to the size of a pea. I wouldn’t know the sex until a blood test at ten weeks! I get that it’s not an overnight process, but my impatient ass was freaking out.

Every day those first few weeks, I’d wake up and look at my belly. It looked like . . . my belly. Like a normal, everyday belly. What. The. Hell?

“Do I look pregnant?” I’d ask Daryl, and he’d smile and nod.

“Hell yeah you look pregnant, babe!”

“Seriously, though, is there even a baby in there? Like for real?”

He didn’t get it. I wanted to look pregnant-pregnant. I wanted to have a big, round belly that announced to every stranger on the street that there was a *baby* in here, even if we weren’t really seeing any strangers anywhere because of COVID. But trust that if I passed someone on the hiking trail or had food delivered, I would tell them “I’m pregnant!” like it was the most normal thing in the world to tell a stranger who is dropping off burritos for dinner. The pregnancy was just ours, which is beautiful in a lot of ways, but also really lonely. Because one of the thrills I imagined of being pregnant for the first time was sharing the experience with other mamas-to-be. But *none* of my friends were even close to being pregnant. They all watched me in awe, like, “We are so glad you are doing this before us so we can learn from you.” There are groups where women who are all due around the

same time meet regularly, and I wanted that! I wanted a little group of friends who could all talk about our experiences and our symptoms. Even though—and this was weird to me—I wasn't really having any symptoms.

### TYPICAL FIRST-TRIMESTER SYMPTOMS<sup>1</sup>

Weird cravings . . . or sudden icks  
Darkened areolas  
Mood swings (blame the hormones)  
Headaches  
Lower back pain  
Nausea  
Fatigue  
Light spotting (not cool!)  
Constipation (again, blame the hormones)  
Peeing more (weird, right?)

### MY FIRST-TRIMESTER SYMPTOMS

Being sleepy  
End of list. That's literally all I experienced . . . sorry!

My boobs felt normal. My body felt normal. I was pooping like normal. The only big sign I felt in these weeks was *exhaustion*. I'm not a big napper, but in that first trimester, I could curl up nearly anywhere and fall into a deep, beautiful sleep.

My first OB appointment was strange. COVID meant that I went to the appointment without Daryl (the policy was mamas only, or I'd

have rolled up with Daryl, my mom, possibly my brothers, Ryan and Justin, and my entire team). It also meant masking up and staying six feet apart from everyone in the waiting room (kinda weird that we used to just cuddle up next to strangers, but also weird to avoid one another this aggressively).

My doctor also didn't make me feel great. I know it's not a doctor's job to be your friend, but I felt like I was bugging him. Even in a huge COVID spike and without any partners or guests allowed, this place was *busy*. The first appointment means a lot of paperwork, and I felt so unprepared and naive when I sat down to fill it out alone, without my husband or my mom. It took me so long the doctor made a joke: "What are you writing, your autobiography?" I was mortified. *If I can't even fill out these forms, how am I gonna have a baby and keep them alive?*

The earliest weeks of pregnancy felt like walking on eggshells: one in four pregnancies end in miscarriage,<sup>2</sup> and that statistic terrified me. If it took a perfect series of events to even get pregnant, how fragile was the process of staying pregnant? I wanted to wrap myself in a cocoon to keep me and the baby safe, but I was also working on a Christmas album and I had a music video to shoot . . . during the pandemic. Could I dance without shaking the baby loose? If I gained weight, would my ankles break if I wore heels?

These might seem like silly questions, but this was the biggest, most important experience of my life so far and the doctor acted like I was the stupidest person he'd ever encountered. "You're twenty-six and healthy," he snipped. "You're not going to miscarry."

At this point, I pulled out my antidepressant, which at the time was 5 mg of lorazepam and 30 mg of citalopram. I told him, "My psychiatrist said it was okay to be on the citalopram, but I should stop the lorazepam."

He quickly waved his hand and said, "Oh, you can throw those candies away."

I was shattered. I felt shame, anger, and disappointment all at the

same time. But I was also too submissive to say how I felt, so I didn't say anything. I just thought to myself, *I need a new OB.*

Then he did a quick vaginal exam. I felt awkward and was still pretty nervous, so I asked him "Does it look pregnant?" while he was investigating me. I was only kind of joking, but the way he laughed didn't feel like he was in on the joke; it felt like he was laughing at me. Maybe it's because he said, "You're like one hour pregnant; relax." I didn't relax; I just forced myself to giggle, shoved down my uncomfortable feelings, and counted the seconds until we were done.

Overall, the appointment felt rushed. I didn't feel heard, and I didn't feel any safer, I just felt . . . stupid and silly. Major red flag, friends. *Major.*

### PRENATAL APPOINTMENT SCHEDULE

This depends on your pregnancy risks and the tests you opt into, but a standard schedule is:

4–28 weeks	Every four weeks
28–36 weeks	Every two weeks
36–40 weeks	Every week!

### YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

It goes without saying, but I sure wish someone had said this to me: Your provider should not make you feel stupid, or silly, or unwelcome. You deserve to be treated with respect and to feel seen and heard through this process.

This first appointment *should* be long: they should ask a million questions about you and your family health history, take your blood,

and run a bunch of tests. But your appointment is yours, so make sure you ask your questions too! No question is a stupid question, especially if you've never done this before. Make a list on your phone if you have to. I did that for every single appointment until birth, and it was so beyond helpful. Some questions to get you started:

- What screenings do you recommend for me based on my family's medical history?
- Do you see any reason for me to modify my current fitness routine or any of my other habits?
- Who do I call if I'm concerned about something? Do you have a nurse line?
- Is this weird pain normal?
- What's your approach to labor and delivery? (If you know you want a home birth, or a hospital birth that includes a birth coach or a doula, this is the time to make sure your provider is on board with your preferences.)
- Are there any additional screenings or tests you'd recommend based on my medical history? (This shit can get expensive, so ask in advance so you have time to research the cost and check with your insurance before you do anything.)

I was nervous about losing the pregnancy, but we also had work to do, so I shot the music video for "Make You Dance" at my house because I was too afraid to go anywhere with the pandemic going on. I was sweaty, my boobs looked *huge*, and I didn't want to show my body even though *literally nobody could tell I was pregnant with a poppy seed*. The director let me put on flowy dresses and kept the camera right on my face. Every time I sang "Got my rosé, been drinking since one . . ." I broke into an involuntary smile. I was *not* drinking rosé; I had a big, beautiful secret growing inside of me.

But did I *feel* beautiful? Honestly . . . no. I'm five foot five and I've

always been thick by Hollywood standards, but when I got pregnant with Riley, I was at my heaviest weight I've ever been at 185 pounds, and I just didn't feel good about myself. And even though I know this should have been the furthest thought from my mind, I was worried about my weight and about the weight I would gain as the pregnancy progressed. Would that be healthy for me? For the baby? And yeah, I have done a lot of work on my own body positivity, but we still live in a culture that celebrates being skinny, and I've never fit that mold.

What I'm trying to say is this: body-image stuff is hard, and getting pregnant is not a magic cure for this. Guys, I hate this! I don't want us worrying about our weight and our appearance while our bodies are doing the actual *miracle* of making a person. But I'm not gonna lie to you, either: I did not feel great about my body before I got pregnant, and I didn't feel great about my body when I *got* pregnant. I didn't *want* to gain any more weight; I just wanted my belly to inflate like a big balloon so I could wear all the cute maternity clothes instead of men's XXL pajama pants and hoodies. I also really wanted to be healthy, but I was *terrified* that if I worked out, I would hurt the baby. Seriously y'all, I would go on the treadmill *gripping* my belly as though a little stroll was going to be too much for my uterus. The internet is filled with hot pregnant ladies running marathons and lifting weights and doing all kinds of crazy shit, but I know everyone is different and I didn't know what was and wasn't okay for *my* body.

And this brought me to two of the most transformational relationships for the way I feel about my body: my relationship with my trainer, Rebecca, and my dietitian, Kristy. I didn't get to work with them until my second trimester, but their approach to fitness and food helped shift my thinking and my entire pregnancy experience, which is why I had to make sure to bring their wisdom to you too.

