

**'MOMMYHOOD'**  
by brette sember**Plus-Size Pregnancy Is a Positive Experience**

I'm a plus-size mom of two children and I found that I had many questions that weren't answered by pregnancy books. I wanted to know if and how my weight impacted my pregnancy and I wanted help finding maternity clothes. I didn't look like the women on the covers of those other books. I needed support and information and it just wasn't out there, so I decided to write the book that I wanted to read - *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom*.

Pregnancy is one of the most special times in a woman's life, yet to read some of the reports in the media, you would think that being plus-sized and pregnant is dangerous, unhealthy, and risky. Contrary to what is often reported, it is absolutely possible to be plus-sized, have a healthy pregnancy, and feel good about yourself. Yes, plus-sized women have some risks that are slightly elevated, but women of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, and histories have different risks during pregnancy. Curvy moms need support and information, just as other women do.

To have a healthy and happy plus-sized pregnancy, follow these tips:

**Find a health care provider you trust who treats you with respect.** Many plus-size women relate stories of doctors and nurses who treated them like second-class citizens. It is essential that you find a health care provider (doctor or midwife) who is size-friendly and does not categorize you as high risk or subject you to unnecessary tests just because of your size. It's important that your health care provider be someone with whom you can talk openly and trust completely. Ask questions and find someone you are comfortable with. Make sure you're comfortable not only with the doctor or midwife, but with the office staff as well. A nurse who makes you miserable during weigh-ins can turn a prenatal visit into something you dread.

**Listen to what your trusted health care provider recommends.** Plus-size women are usually encouraged to gain slightly less weight during pregnancy than other women. Listening to this recommendation can greatly reduce the chance of problems during pregnancy. Most physicians agree that plus-size women need to gain weight during pregnancy, so anyone who tells you need to lose weight or not gain at all is misinformed. Discuss any prenatal tests with your health care provider and understand exactly what your risks are. Plus-size moms do have higher rates of some problems, but with good medical care, a healthy pregnancy and absolutely perfect baby are definitely the norm. Ask a lot of questions and become a full partner in your care. Don't be afraid to ask for more information and don't hesitate to get a second opinion if you feel you need it.

**Find maternity clothes that make you feel good about yourself.** Plus-size maternity clothes do exist! Many plus-size moms feel discouraged by the lack of attractive and modern maternity clothes in their size. Some moms opt to wear larger regular clothes (and chafe at the suggestion that they should just wear their husband's clothes - which may not fit), but doing so can add to "invisible pregnancy syndrome", where you're pregnant, but no one can tell and they just assume you're fat and frumpy. Dressing in clothes that emphasize your pregnant belly tells the world your joyful news and helps you feel proud of the wonderful baby growing inside you. More and more designers and stores are waking up to the need for attractive plus-size maternity clothes. Stores such as Fashion Bug, JC Penney, Motherhood Maternity, and many online shops such as JakeandMe.com or DueMaternity.com now carry plus-size maternity clothes that go beyond the traditional potato sack items of the past. There are so many styles and colors to choose from.



**Love your body.** Your body is performing a miracle right now. Lots of plus-size women hate their bodies or resent them. This is the one time in your life where you absolutely cannot diet and have no choice but to embrace your changing shape. You've got to step up and tell yourself, "this is who I am and I am beautiful." Love your body as you would love your baby. Plus-size pregnant women are gorgeous and shapely and their bodies deserve just as much admiration and respect as other pregnant bodies. Adopting a positive mentality about the important work your body is doing will go a long way to helping you feel good about yourself.

**Take time to enjoy your pregnancy.** Pregnancy is a fleeting time - as long as those nine months seem right now, they really will go by in the blink of an eye. Keep a pregnancy journal and make time to just sit and feel the baby move. Be sure to take some photos. Lots of plus-size pregnant moms are hesitant to get in front of a camera, but when it's over, you'll wish you had photos to show your child. Some moms enjoy going for additional (non-medical) ultrasounds at malls or using a home Doppler to listen to their baby's heartbeat at home. Staying focused on your pregnancy will remind of the joyful reason for all you're going through.

**Get support.** It's easy to feel as if you are alone when you're pregnant and plus-sized. All of the pregnancy magazines are filled with photos of stick women with basketballs attached to their bellies. Join an online support group for plus-sized moms and find out that you truly are not alone (find them at BabyCenter.com, FertilityPlus.org, and YourPlusSizePregnancy.com). Talk to women in your family who have similar body shapes - they've been there and can offer support and advice. Open up about how you feel to your partner, who loves your body and can help reassure you that you are a gorgeous woman. Keeping it all inside will only make you feel worse. Lean on others and let them help you feel good about yourself.

**Photographer:** Ana Miyares  
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**about brette sember**

Brette Sember is the co-author of *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom* (Barricade Books) and owner of the web site <http://www.yourplussizepregnancy.com/>. She is the plus-sized mom of two wonderful children.



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