

'MOMMYHOOD'
by brette sember

Staying Positive Through Your Plus-Size Pregnancy

Pregnancy is probably one of the most gracious events in your life – you’ve turned your body over to this new little being with complete welcome and joy. But when you’re plus-sized and pregnant, you’re not only facing all the usual pregnancy challenges – tiredness, nausea, nervousness, impatience, and discomfort – you also have to deal with what the world thinks of you and your size. Although there is more and more acceptance of plus-sized women, there is still a real barrier there. How do you deal with the challenges facing you and still remain gracious, happy, and joyful about your pregnancy?

Dress for Yourself

There are very few stores that actually sell plus-size maternity clothes and those that do are sure to hide them in the back corner. The clothes you might find are often several years behind other styles and many are made with huge arms, giant necklines and oversized armholes – they might fit King Kong, but not your average plus-sized woman. If you do venture into a store that doesn’t carry your size you might encounter a salesperson who is obviously rude or inconsiderate to you.

Just because your local maternity store does not consider you a viable customer does not mean you can’t dress well during pregnancy. There are many online plus-size maternity stores, mostly run by plus-size moms who saw the need and stepped in to fill it. These store owners are usually willing to help you find a good fit and may even be able to custom make clothing just for you. Ebay is another great place to shop.

You can also buy larger size regular clothing and create a maternity wardrobe that way. These types of clothing are more apt to be in today’s styles and offer you the freedom to dress to your own sense of style. Forget “Baby on Board” and wear low rider pants, belly baring shirts and anything else that makes you feel beautiful, gorgeous, and sexy. Give yourself permission to look great and feel great throughout your pregnancy.

Ask Your Health Care Providers for What You Need

A plus-size woman usually needs a larger size blood pressure cuff, not only for comfort, but also to ensure an accurate reading. A cuff that is too tight is going to give a false high reading. Unfortunately, many doctor’s offices have no large cuff, or don’t have enough. If a health care provider tries to use a cuff that is too small, politely ask if they have one that is larger. Gently insist that they find it for you because you are aware of the impact a small cuff can have on your reading.

Many offices also do not have gowns sized appropriately to cover larger bodies. First ask if they have a larger size. If not, ask for two gowns and wear one open in the back and one open in the front for complete coverage. When you go to the hospital to give birth, you can bring along an oversize button-front shirt to wear if you’d like.

There are still health care providers who are not completely educated about how best to care for and talk to plus-size pregnant women. Some plus-size women are hesitant to speak up when they encounter someone like this, but the fact of the matter is that you are entitled to have someone who treats you with graciousness and compassion during pregnancy. Switch providers if necessary and don’t be afraid to speak up if you feel you’re being treated in an unfriendly way. One important thing I learned while researching my book, **Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom** was that there are some health care providers who find caring for a plus-size woman stressful – particularly during delivery where important decisions have to be made quickly. Some health care providers react to the stress of the situation by treating their patients in a gruff or unpleasant manner. Often if you point this out, the provider realizes what he or she is doing and can make an adjustment.

If you encounter aides or nurses who are unfriendly to you, a simple word to your main health care provider will take care of this problem – it’s her office and she knows that her staff represents her.



Ask Questions

Some health care providers require their pregnant curvy moms to endure regular gestational diabetes tests, recommend scheduled C-sections, or discourage them from breastfeeding, even when medical standards contradict these actions. Being plus-sized does not mean you’re sick or unable to have a healthy pregnancy. All pregnant women want doctors who look out for their best interests, but it’s time obstetricians and midwives realize that plus-size women are not all walking time bombs.

If your health care provider recommends something for you that you know is out of the ordinary and is not something required in most pregnancies, put the brakes on and ask your health care provider to take some time and talk with you about why this recommended, what the real risks and benefits are, and how your care will be handled if you decline this recommendation. You have the right to make the decisions about your own body.

Working with your pregnancy health care provider should be a partnership – one that includes mutual respect. You can’t be a partner if you’re in the dark about your care. Become an active participant in your care, and be sure to express your reservations and concerns at any point should they come up. If you both are gracious with each other, your relationship will be one of mutual trust.

Find Your Own Comfort Zone

All pregnant women go through a stage when they don’t yet truly look pregnant, but instead look bloated or chunkier. Curvy moms sometimes find this stage lasts longer for them, and even when they do begin to show, some people assume they’ve just eaten too many hot fudge sundaes.

While writing my book, I interviewed hundreds of plus-size women, and many reported incidents in which people made rude comments and assumed they were just fat and not pregnant. One woman I talked to was at the mall one day, seven months pregnant, and someone walked past her and said to his companion, “Someone needs to call 1-800-Jenny.”

Curvy moms just want the opportunity to enjoy their pregnancies and walk down the street without people rolling their eyes at them. You can’t control the way people act or what they say to you, but you can control how it makes you feel and how you react to it. Carrying your head high and feeling proud of the incredible work your body is doing will help you remain positive even when others try to bring you down.



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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) which is endorsed by the State University at New York Medical School Department of Ob/Gyn, and is the owner of the web site <http://www.yourplussizepregnancy.com/>. She is the plus-sized mom of two wonderful children.

