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Expert Gives Plus-Size Women Tips on Being Pregnant and Staying Healthy

Half of all women of childbearing age are plus-sized, wearing a size 14 and above. The media is often filled with alarming reports of the dangers of being pregnant and overweight. “It’s not true,” says Brette Sember, co-author of *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom* (ISBN: 1-56980-290-4, Barricade Books, Paperback, \$14.95). “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. We need to focus on supporting and helping plus-sized expectant moms rather than scaring them.” *Your Plus-Size Pregnancy* is a complete medical and emotional guide for curvy moms.

Sember offers 5 tips to help plus-size moms-to-be stay healthy and enjoy their pregnancies:

1. **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 who is size friendly and does not categorize you as high risk or subject you to unnecessary tests because of your size. It is also important to find a health care provider with whom you can talk openly and trust completely. Ask questions and find someone you are comfortable with.
2. **Listen to what your trusted health care provider recommends.** Overweight women are usually encouraged to gain slightly less weight during pregnancy than other women and listening to this recommendation can greatly reduce the chance of problems during pregnancy. It is also essential to discuss any prenatal tests with your health care provider and understand exactly what your risks are. It’s not true that plus-size women are doomed to have difficult pregnancies and defective babies.
3. **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.

4. **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 you've got to step up and tell yourself this is who I am and I am beautiful. Plus-size pregnant women are gorgeous and shapely and their bodies deserve just as much admiration and respect as other pregnant bodies. Pampering yourself and adopting a positive mentality about the important work your body is doing will go a long way to helping you feel good about yourself.
5. **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. Talk to women in your family who have similar body shapes – they've been there. 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.

Your Plus-Size Pregnancy: The Ultimate Guide for the Full-Figured Expectant Mom is co-authored by Sember and Dr. Bruce D. Rodgers, a Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist, and endorsed by the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics, School of Bio-Medical Sciences, State University of New York at Buffalo. The book is filled with quotes from real plus-size women about their experiences during pregnancy. Published by Barricade Books, the book is priced at \$14.95 and is available at bookstores as well as online. More information is available at www.YourPlusSizePregnancy.com.