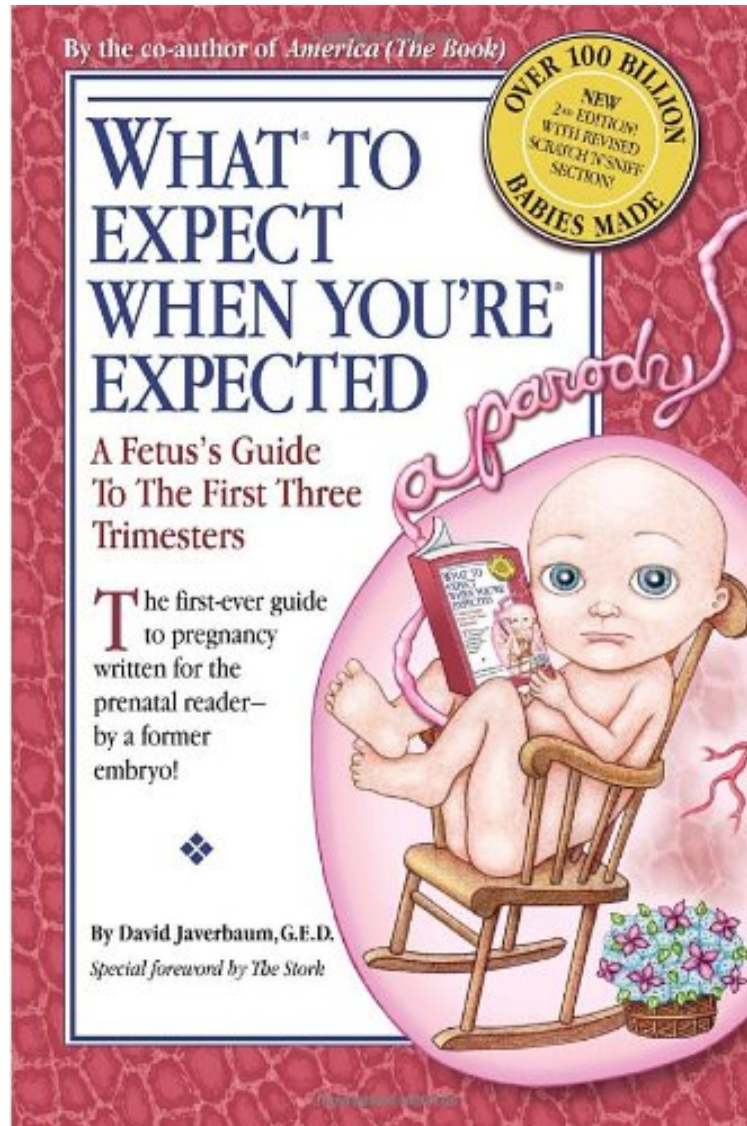


# What to Expect When You're Expected: A Fetus's Guide to the First Three Trimesters

David Javerbaum

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This new second edition is filled with the latest, most accurate wombhood information, including comforting answers to hundreds of questions, such as • “My mother just took a sip of white wine. Am I going to end up looking like some Chernobyl baby now?” • “So far Mommy is spending most of her pregnancy in a state of stress, anxiety, and depression. Which one should she focus on?” • “I’m kicking as hard as I can, but Mom says it feels like ‘butterflies fluttering.’ Am I doing something wrong?” • “Why do my parents blast Mozart at me every night right when I’m trying to sleep?!” • “To the nearest hundred, how many people should Mommy invite to my birth?”

"This story has it all— perfect pacing, organic character development, a plot that truly thickens, and a shock ending you literally won't see coming until the final spellbinding moments!" —Publishers Trimesterly "I am in receipt of your check for \$20. Here is the positive blurb you requested." —Stephen King "Swim, don't wriggle, up your nearest Fallopian tube and land on a copy today!" —The New York Pre "I'm as sure that this book is terrific as I am that, notwithstanding the provisions of sections 106 and 106A, the fair use of a copyrighted work for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research is not an infringement of copyright!" —The Copyright Act of 1976, § 107 "I wish you'd never been born! (Without reading this, that is!)" —Your father About the Author David Javerbaum has won nine Emmys and two Peabody Awards for his work as Writer, Head Writer and Executive Producer of The Daily Show with Jon Stewart. He was one of three principal authors of that show's 2004 best-seller America: The Book. His work as a lyricist includes collaborating with composer Adam Schlesinger on the score for the Tony-nominated Broadway musical Cry-Baby and Stephen Colbert's television special A Colbert Christmas: The Greatest Gift of All. He lives in Manhattan with his wife Debra and their daughters Kate and Sara. Mike Loew is a contributor to The Onion and the author of two previous books, Tough Call and Citizen You! He lives in Brooklyn, New York. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter One Conception When Wanted Life Begins So you're a zygote. Congratulations! Existence is one of the most exciting things that will ever happen to you. You are the end result of both four billion years of evolution and three minutes of rubbing. In the cosmic sense, the question of where we come from, along with that of where we go when-spoiler alert!-we die, are the unfathomable co-nundrums bookending our brief time on earth. But such metaphysical niceties are, perhaps, too abstract for a lay zygote like yourself. So let's focus on the more immediate causes. "The Talk" "Where do babies come from? And when will I get to be one?" "We'll begin with your mother. Word is she's so dumb, she hears it's chilly outside and gets a bowl. More to the point, she's also fertile, and last month, she released an ovum, or egg, from its dank cell inside the women's prison known as her ovary. No doubt this ovum expected to end up like most or all its older siblings-as part of a small red spot on the white pants Mom foolishly wore to the company picnic. But a different fate was in store for it, a rendezvous with a milky sausagefest known as semen. This liquid comes from your father, and given his track record, the hundreds of millions of sperm comprising it no doubt also expected a grisly end (see chart, p. 5). But last night, inspired by pornography and/or the faded memory of a high-school girlfriend, your father inserted his erect penis, or "pee-pee," into your mother's vagina, or "cooch." They then engaged in a once filthy act now rendered dispiritingly functional. When the semen wrangling was over, five hundred million microscopic demi-Q-tips were discharged intra-coochally. What followed was a brutal ordeal, with contestants forced to swim the equivalent of hundreds of miles upstream with no map and no compass . . . all while literally flagellating themselves. It was exactly like Fear Factor, only it wasn't hosted by Joe Rogan. So at least it was better than Fear Factor. The carnage left your mother's birth canal looking like a Civil War battlefield, and as with those battlefields, the scene had probably been reenacted many, many times. But this time was different. This time, one sperm managed to overcome the odds and arrive at his destiny-fair Lady Ovum. Their conversation was the stuff of legend. SPERM: "Tsup. EGG: "Tsup. [Awkward pause] SPERM: So, I guess we should, ummm . . . EGG: Yeah. [SPERM begins penetration.] SPERM: Does this feel good? EGG: Does what feel good? SPERM: Yikes. The sperm passed through the ovum's outer protective layers-the corona radiata, the zona pellucida, and the moat-until finally reaching its creamy nougat center, where, after one last bumping of uglies, you were created (see Fig. 2). Disappointed? Perhaps you'd hoped your entrée into life would be more "cherubs playing trumpet fanfares" and less "heaping dollops of human ejaculate." This is a common preconception, pre-conception. But in truth, yours was a noble genesis. It turns out nature has a goo fetish. Life itself started with primeval soup.\* Ever since, the rule has been:

The more complex the species, the ickier its creation. Well, you are earth's highest life-form, and by the time you're born, you'll be covered in so much gunk you'll look like Gollum in chowder! A final note: There is a very tiny chance your origin involved neither sperm nor egg, but rather the Word of God breathing flesh into the womb of a Blessed Virgin. If this is the case, man, have we been waiting for You! Womb With a View "I'm in a petri dish, and a lot of what you've said so far doesn't make sense." That's because you're a test-tube baby, and an abomination against the will of God. Unlike regular, or "normal," children, you were created when a doctor removed ova kicking and screaming from their natural habitat and marinated them in sperm that are, in all likelihood, his. (Shhhhhhh!) You'll be waiting in a lab for three to five days, so use this time to soak in the glories of the outside world—the Medi-Sharps collection bin, the overhead fluorescent light, the lab technician.\* Eventually, an embryologist will judge you based on evenness of growth, degree of fragmentation, and talent. (Tip: Don't sing "Stayin' Alive." It comes off desperate.) If all goes well, it's just a hop, skip, and a catheter ride back inside Mommy. If not, welcome to the exciting stem-cell research debate! Were You an Oopsie? "I heard that if the tail on the sperm that conceived me bent to the left it means I was an accident. Is this true or just an old eggs' tale?" It is natural to wonder if you were the deliberate creation of two people in love, or the unintended by-product of an office party at Outback Steakhouse gone horribly awry. Alas, none of the widely circulated "methods" of determining intent have any scientific validity, be they the bend of the sperm's tail, the thickness of the zona pellucida, or the notorious infantile taunt, If you see the epiblast, Mommy has a child at last. If the hypoblast is first, Daddy's rubber musta burst! Nevertheless, in this enlightened age of birth control, single motherhood, and enough Internet porn for mankind to shoot off a cum rope to Neptune every six minutes, it is doubtful you were a total accident. Indeed, it's far more likely you were the extremely unaccidental result of either the test-tube procedure or some other method, such as hormone injections, ovarian stimulation, artificial insemination, frozen-embryo transfers, vaginotherapy, cervical spelunking, testicular taunting, turkey basterectomy, Wiccan acupuncture, gingerroot douches, oyster enemas, sperm bidets, Sybian colonics, intrauterine feng shui, epatoscomancy (divination of the entrails of sacrificed animals), and/or stealing a baby from a hospital. Besides, even if your parents didn't mean for you to happen, that has no bearing whatsoever on your intrinsic worth as a human being. It just greatly reduces the chances that you'll get to be one. Code Dependency "Help! My parents just gave me this 'DNA' stuff, and now it's telling me exactly what to do. Why are they bossing me around?! I'm my own cell!" DNA—which stands for "Do Not Alter," the directive it stamps on your soul—is a substance so incredibly potent, it can be used to frame you for murder at the age of eight cells. Chemically, of course, it's a polymeric series of double-helical nucleotides with an ester-bonded sugar/phosphate backbone linking four purine or pyrimidine bases: Awesome Apple(r), Chillin' Cherry(r), Groovylicious Grape(r), and Thrillin' Thymine(r). When a sperm fertilizes an egg, their DNA merge into units called genes. They're an even split, belonging half to your mother and half to your father, just as you will after their prolonged custody battle a few years down the road. These genes are organized into larger units called chromosomes, and this is probably a good time for you to do a self-inventory of those, because you're going to want to have forty-six. Like, exactly. If you're missing a couple, stop what you're doing and find them.\* Anyhoo, these chromosomes form your instruction manual, and the new science of genome analysis is now revealing some of the mysteries contained within (see chart, p. 10). But though your genes are something over which you have no control, take heart: Your development will be just as profoundly shaped by your upbringing, over which you have merely almost no control. Though the perennial "Nature versus Nurture" debate was resolved 5-4 for Nature by the Supreme Court in 2003, it's now clear the two forces work in conjunction. Nature may preordain that you're a serial killer, but it is nurture that will determine your preferred victim type and method of death. Similarly, the nurture of a warm, loving family will in the end serve only to highlight your true nature as a parasitic slacker living in their basement. So, to address your initial complaint: Don't waste your time in the womb resenting your parents. You have your whole life ahead of you for that. † A Fetal Examination PARENTAL DIAGNOSIS: ALLAYING YOUR FEARS Eyes, hair color, personality: Fetacy is a time of uncertainty when it comes to many subjects. Most of these prompt little more than fun debate. But there's one question no embryo likes to joke about, one few even want to discuss: "Are my parents idiots?" Until recently, that question could only be answered at birth. But breakthroughs in the field of parental diagnosis mean it's now possible to find out as early as the middle of the first trimester whether your mommy and daddy have any idea what they're doing. Most embryos and fetuses choose not to avail themselves of this option, preferring to cling as long as possible to the faint hope their parents aren't a few bricks shy of a load. But for those in high-risk categories, the benefits of parental diagnosis outweigh the risks. Good candidates include those unborns whose mom or dad • is over thirty-five and still has a ponytail • has been exposed, since your conception, to over ten minutes of The Real Housewives of New York City • is already resented by previous children • consider themselves well prepared for parenting because "they have two nieces they're so close with" • has an infant-sized Che Guevara T-shirt all picked out for you • is a Cubs fan Types of Tests There are now dozens of tests used to help determine if your parents are neither all that nor a bag of chips. These include analyses of TV habits, iPod playlists, ball-scratching frequency, even voting records.\* Among the best known are the following: Quad Screening What is it? In quad screening, a technician draws a sample of your parents' blood and tests it for the presence of four substances: Schlitz, patchouli, Chef Boyardee's Dinosaurs with Mini Meatballs, and horse tranquilizer. What does it prove? The presence of one of these increases the

risk that your parents are incompetent. The presence of all of them indicates that you are the Antichrist. Vigorous Chronic Sampling (VCS) What is it? In the presence of a specially trained obstetrician, Mommy and Daddy take a fat blunt of da chronic, carefully removed from Snoop Dogg's crib. What does it prove? If a stranger in a lab coat was able to convince them to smoke some of Snoop Dogg's shit, homeys got shit-ass judgment. Ultrasuede(r) testing What is it? Parents are given swatches of Ultrasuede(r)-a remarkable space-age microfiber that feels exactly like suede but is stain- and discoloration-resistant-and asked to rub them with dirt, wine, and tomato sauce. They then clean the stains off with simple soap and water. What does it prove? The remarkable durability of Ultrasuede(r)! Fabiocentesis What is it? In a very invasive procedure, a team of child-welfare agents raid your mother's bookshelves looking for novels with Fabio on the cover. What does it prove? She has too much free time. Worst-Case Scenario Parental diagnoses quite frequently reveal that Mommy and Daddy are suffering from severe uncertainty, insecurity, and purposeless gnawing dread. This is a good sign. It shows that they've begun developing the contemporary parenting skills they'll need to replace the love, innate common sense, and three-million-year-old stockpile of genetic wisdom they might otherwise have foolishly relied on. But what if the tests reveal more? What if there is patchouli? What if da chronic does blow their mizz-inds? What if dozens of volumes in Mommy's bookcase are adorned by Fabio's shirtless majesty? It's an intensely personal decision. While terminating your parents is a constitutionally protected right (at least for now), it is still a harrowing and frankly somewhat self-destructive proposition. The truth is only .03 percent of parents are absolutely perfect. The remaining 99.97 percent can pretty much be counted on to act like total dumbasses at some or all parts of your life. So yes, in all likelihood there is indeed something profoundly wrong with your parents. But is it worth doing something drastic about? Probably not. First off, most kids take great pleasure in discovering how ill equipped Mom and Dad truly are. You may even come to grow fond of them as they cutely flail about, acting like they have the slightest clue about how to raise you. More important, they're not alone. As parenting skills have declined over the last few decades, America has responded with parenting experts, childbirth counselors, lactation consultants, couvade mentors, contraction managers, doulas, midwives, hypnobirthers, prenatal uterine masseuses, Ayurvedic newborn karmographers, baby whisperers, baby yellers, baby sign- language teachers, baby yoga, baby Pilates, baby pole dancing, babyproof toilet locks/door stoppers/drawer catches/outlet plugs/corner cushions/crib tents/nonslip heat-sensitive color- changing bath appliqués/twenty-four-hour infrared video monitors with wet-diaper cowbell alarms/twenty-gallon jars of Purell, nipple shields, hooter hiders, flexishield areola stimulators, wind-powered breast pumps, at-home sonograms, wiper warmers, wiper warmer cozies, pregnancy books, pregnancy journals, pregnancy nutrition journals, gay pregnancy nutrition journals, "baby bumps," expectant celebrities whose fetuses outweigh them, American Baby, Fit Pregnancy, Parenting, MILF Parenting, other maternity magazines no one actually subscribes to but that make people feel guilty when they see them in pediatric waiting rooms, message boards, chat rooms, fear blogs, scare spam, scientific studies, unscientific studies, alarming anecdotes about friends of friends, news items about sixty-five-year-old Italian women carrying their granddaughters' quints, and thousands of other components making up what President Eisenhower called "the maternity-industrial complex." So buck up! You won't be battling your parents' craziness alone. You'll have the world's craziness right alongside you. Throughout Your Fetalcy Unborn babies have always worried. (Hence, their "fetal position.") What they worry about, however, has changed considerably over the generations. Hundreds of years ago, your forefetus worried that a slap on Mommy's belly might leave them with a hand-shaped birthmark, or that her penchant for bananas would turn them into gorillas. The march of science proved these fears wrong and treatable, respectively. Today's fetus has its own array of concerns. It seems every activity your mother engages in raises questions: Should she be shooting heroin? Is crop dusting really a good idea? How much rugby is too much rugby? And when can I get more of that delicious heroin? Calm down. As discussed in the last chapter, you're not alone in your battle for survival against the woman giving you life. A vast army is working to imbue Mommy with the baseline alarmism she needs to ensure you emerge safe and healthy from her hoo-ha in forty weeks. What You May Be Concerned She's Not Concerned About Practitioner, Practitioner, Practitioner "I really think my mother needs professional help." And she's going to get it! The days of going through pregnancy and labor with little or no medical supervision are over.\* Today's gravida has access to a wide variety of professionals armed with the knowledge, equipment, and vague anecdotal evidence to remove any stress you may be feeling and put it squarely where it belongs-in Mommy's brain. The first decision Mommy must make (and Daddy must obediently acquiesce to) is what type of practitioner is right for her. Most women select an obstetrician for their care. Despite their snobby reputations for having "degrees from medical school" and "years of rigorous training," obstetricians can actually be quite personable and reassuring; the most skilled pepper their conversations with phrases like "heck," "shucks," and "now, don't this vaginal discharge just beat all?" Ten to twelve percent of women choose a family practitioner (FP). FPs are the decathletes of medicine-pretty good at lots of stuff, but not great at anything in particular. They're a good choice for a woman looking for a doctor to not only help her have a healthy baby but cure her sore throat, set her broken wrist, and write her "friendly" prescriptions for Percocet. A third option is a midwife. Midwives are trained to see Mommy as a person rather than a patient and are more willing to take the time to talk with her about her emotional well-being. They are total wastes of money.