

This is When to Announce Your Pregnancy

Plus, more advice from etiquette experts on how to handle sticky pregnancy situations, from awkward baby name pressure to people touching your belly.

By **Deborah Skolnik**



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Once you find out you're pregnant, there will be a slew of new social situations to deal with that you've never experienced before. The very first one you'll face? Knowing when (and how) to tell friends and family you're pregnant.

"It's fine to share the news with family and friends whenever you want," says Marjorie Brody, author of *Professional Impressions: Etiquette for Everyone, Every Day*. Although some people wait until after the first trimester – when there's less risk of miscarriage – you don't have to keep the news a secret if you don't want to.

Still, there are some benefits to keeping quiet for a while. "One disadvantage of telling everybody early is that they'll be asking, "How are you feeling?" for months, and you may grow tired of answering," Brody says. Holding off a bit may also spare some unnecessary worry. "Because older relatives are from generations when things went wrong more often than happens now, they may be really anxious about your pregnancy," says Dana May Casperson, author of *Power Etiquette: What You Don't Know Can Kill Your Career*.

As for coworkers and bosses, wait as long as possible. "Hold off until the end of your first trimester – even longer if you're not showing or if the news could interfere with a promotion," says Judith Bowman, founder of Protocol Consultants International, an etiquette-enrichment training firm. Then privately tell your boss.

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"You could say, I have exciting news to tell you: My husband and I are expecting a baby in [give the month you're due]," Casperson advises.

"Reassure her that you will continue working for as long as possible and that you plan to return after the baby is born." Because your boss may want to discuss matters immediately, be sure to have researched the company's maternity-leave policy beforehand.

We asked our etiquette experts to weigh in on more sticky pregnancy situations to help you through the next nine months.

How do I share the news with a good friend who's having fertility problems?

In a word, delicately. "Call or get together, and gently say, "Sarah, I'm pregnant. You're one of my best friends, so I wanted to tell you," Brody suggests. And though it's not necessary to be apologetic, it is wise to restrain your exuberance. "I would try not to overdo it with regular updates," Casperson says.

Whatever else, don't make a fertility-challenged pal the last one in your social circle to know that you're expecting. "It'll kill the friendship if she gets the info secondhand," Casperson warns. In fact, try to tell her in advance of other acquaintances so she'll have time to digest the news.

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How can I get people to stop feeling my belly?

"Touching someone's body is way out of bounds," Casperson says. Yet as any pregnant woman will confirm, it happens. Though a sharp "Please don't touch me!" is appropriate for fending off a stranger who reaches for you, diplomacy is called for when the hand belongs to an acquaintance, a coworker, or a relative. "If you bluntly tell the person that you don't want her patting your belly, chances are she'll feel embarrassed or hurt," Casperson says.

Your best bet: Grin and bear it. After all, people aren't touching you to be malicious; if anything, it's a sign of affection. Still, if it really bothers you, a little humor might defuse the situation.

"Say, "The baby's sleeping. Can I just give you a verbal report?" Casperson suggests. One final option: Tell your spouse, your best friend, or a coworker you're close to that you'd prefer that people not touch your stomach, and ask that he or she tactfully spread the word.

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My husband's name is Cornelius Millard Lipschitz -- the Third. Does our son have to be the Fourth?

"It's your baby and your choice," Bowman says. Still, stating this outright will only antagonize relatives if they feel passionately you should follow the

family naming tradition. Rather than cause an argument, simply say that you haven't decided on a name yet. Announce your selection only after the baby's birth.

Picking a name that still acknowledges Junior's heritage, however, can help soften the blow. Though the decision is entirely up to you, you could try something with the same initials or use other family names. Or compromise by making Cornelius the middle name. As a last resort, you can give your child a different, more modern middle name – and call him that.

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I'm feeling awful these days. If no one offers me a seat on the bus or train, can I ask a fellow passenger to give up his?

Of course. "There are usually seats designated for the elderly or the disabled on public transportation," Casperson says. "Start with the people sitting there." How much information you want to share, especially if you aren't showing yet, is up to you.

You may simply ask, "May I please change places with one of you?" Or go for a little drama. "Say, 'Would you mind if I take your seat right now? I'm newly pregnant and feeling queasy,'" Brody suggests. "Trust me, someone will jump up and give it to you."

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