University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange

Family | UT Extension Publications

1-1-2006

SP418-Healthy Children: Becoming A Parent

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

Follow this and additional works at: http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_agexfami

Recommended Citation
"SP418-Healthy Children: Becoming A Parent," The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service, SP418 -3M-1/06(Rev) E12-5315-017-06 06-0144, http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_agexfami/13

The publications in this collection represent the historical publishing record of the UT Agricultural Experiment Station and do not necessarily reflect current scientific knowledge or recommendations. Current information about UT Ag Research can be found at the UT Ag Research website.
This Parenting, Children and Teens is brought to you for free and open access by the UT Extension Publications at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Family by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

PARENTS COMMUNITIES

UT Extension

SP418

Healthy Children Ready to Learn

BECOMING A PARENT

Welcome to *HEALTHY CHILDREN* — a series of 27 newsletters that will help you discover how your baby grows and develops each month. It will take you through some of the ups and downs, the ins and outs of being a parent. *HEALTHY CHILDREN* will talk about YOU and your feelings about being a new parent. It will also give practical advice and suggestions for you and your baby.

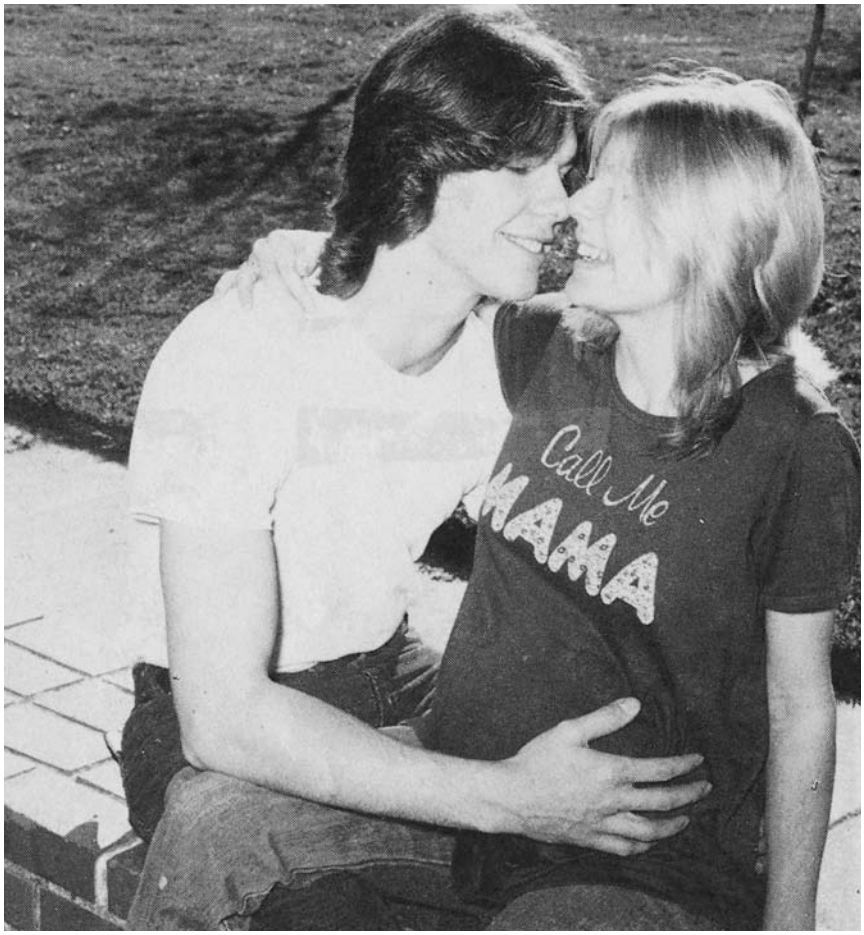
The first three issues — *Becoming a Parent, Getting Ready and Newborn Baby* — highlight how to prepare for the big event and focus on the first few weeks of the new-born's life. The following issues cover each month of your baby's first year.

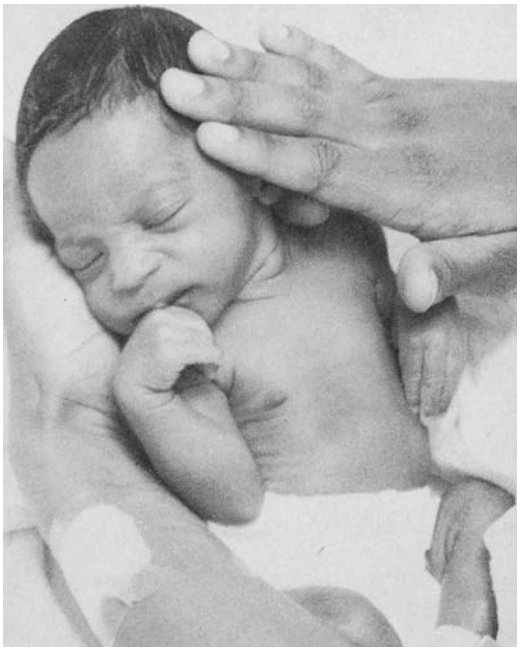
This issue of *HEALTHY CHILDREN* looks at some things to consider before your baby enters your life. Being a new parent can be an exciting time. It can be a little scary too. It will change your life in many ways. The more you think about these changes beforehand, the more you will feel in charge of your own life.

This will be an important first year for you and your baby. *HEALTHY CHILDREN* is glad to be part of it!

FATHERS . . .

DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU FEEL NERVOUS OR LEFT OUT





Now all the attention seems to focus on the mother-to-be, and later it will center on the new baby. But this is a time when fathers are needed. Pregnant women may sometimes be uneasy about the ways their bodies have changed, especially during the last few months of pregnancy. They may be upset that they don't look like they used to, can't move around like they used to, and feel more tired and heavy than they used to. Talk to your partner. Tell her how you feel about her and about the new baby and listen to how she is feeling. Sharing your feelings can bring you closer together and can help you feel part of things.

Robert McClay

Tracy Borland

WHAT TO EXPECT

Having a baby—especially your first—is a time of many changes. Most first-time parents receive little preparation for the "big event" and the many ways the new baby will have an impact on their lives.

If you will be raising your baby alone, going to school or working, you will have added pressures on your time and energy. You will need to figure out how to juggle your many responsibilities. The decisions and arrangements you make now will help ease the transition into parenthood after your baby is born. Check what resources are available for parents in your community. It is important to find as many supports as you can.

If you are a couple, expect some strains as you make the transition into parenthood. Both of you may have feelings you could not predict. For example, a new mother is usually very occupied with the baby, and as a result, the father may feel pushed aside and ignored. Make an agreement that you will talk to each other about

your ups and downs and about your many new experiences and feelings.

Before the baby arrives is also a good time to discuss the sharing of responsibilities. Family roles are changing so that many couples feel more flexible about who is going to do what in taking care of the baby and household chores. Try to agree on your different roles. The key word is agree. The more you both agree now, the less resentments and misunderstandings will pile up later.

The decisions and arrangements you make now will help ease the transition into parenthood after your baby is born.

Whether you're a couple or single, living alone or with your parents, your new baby will bring new experiences, pressures and worries, as well as joy and excitement. In those first hectic weeks, your life will seem to center around your small, helpless, but demanding infant. There may be times when you will feel unsure of yourself, moody or even overwhelmed. Most new parents feel this way at first.

It will take time to feel comfortable in your new role as a parent. After all, being a new parent is "on-the-job training" and you should not expect that you will know how to handle everything overnight. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF. Remember, you are not alone in your feelings and this time of adjustment will pass.

FEEDING YOUR BABY

Consider breast-feeding your baby. *There is no better way to show your child how much you care. No other food is as good for your baby. No other feeding method is as good for you.*

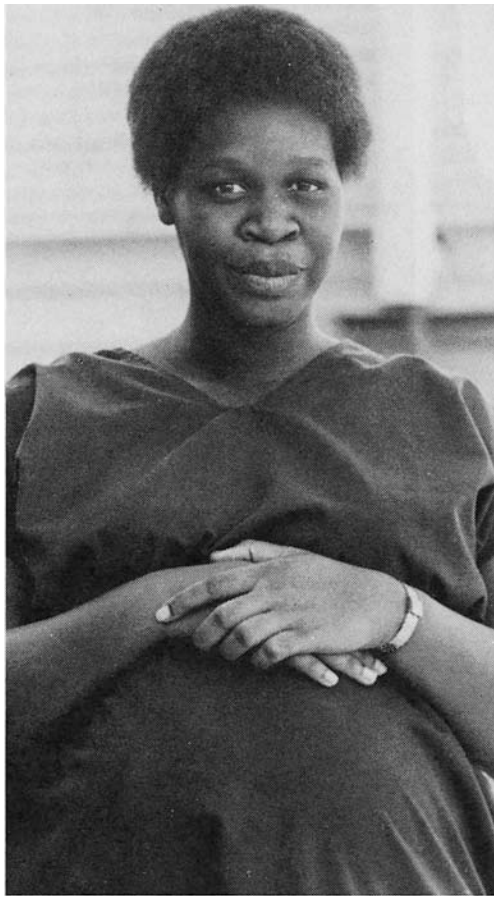
Breast Milk

- Is always clean when it comes straight from the breast. There is never the chance of germs from water or bottles.
- Has good bacteria that prevent the growth of harmful organisms, especially those that cause colds and ear infections.
- Has the right amount of nutrients for your baby's growth, brain development and digestion. It is made for your baby, not a calf.
- Decreases the chances that your baby will have food allergies.
- Is easy to prepare. There are no bottles to sterilize and no formula to buy, measure and mix.
- Is economical. The extra food for nursing is less expensive than buying formula.

Breast-feeding

- Promotes good jaw development because sucking from the breast exercises the muscles better than sucking from a bottle. This also encourages growth of healthy, straight teeth.
- Helps your baby form an attachment to you and you to your baby. Nursing satisfies your baby's need to be close to you and helps you feel close to your baby.
- May make it easier to lose the extra pounds of pregnancy, since nursing uses calories.
- Stimulates the uterus to contract back to its original size.

TIME OUT



Having a baby is hard work. Try to arrange some time off just for yourself.

You may be able to ask a close relative or friend to stay with you for a few hours, or even a few days, when you come home with your new baby. This is especially important if you are a single parent or if you are expecting twins. In the case of twins, it will be doubly important for you to have some free time. Any help you can get to cope with the extra work load will make it easier for you. It will give you some time to relax — to nap, take a walk or read a book.

Some city or county health departments have a visiting nurse service. Sometimes this service is free. The nurse can give you advice on caring for your baby, plus other helpful information. You will find the phone number for the health department under the county or city listing in the white pages of the phone book.

IT'S TIME!

When it's time for your baby to be born, one or all of the following will happen. They are all normal. This is the beginning of your labor and the birthing process.

1. Contractions (also called labor pains) will start. They may feel like a series of gas pains, a backache or strong menstrual cramps. Each one may last for 10 to 40 seconds.

2. The "bag of water" that holds your baby will break or leak. There will be a slow trickle or a gush of warm water from your vagina. You will not be able to control the flow of water. But don't worry — your baby will not drop out!

3. A "show" will occur. This is a pink or reddish discharge from your vagina. It will look like the beginning of a menstrual period.

If any of these things happens, or if your labor pains continue and are spaced five minutes apart or less, it is time to call your doctor, the hospital or your trained midwife.

No Such Thing as "Perfect"

THE PERFECT BIRTH

There is no "perfect" birth. Each birth is different. The important thing is to bring your baby into the world in the healthiest way possible — for both the baby and you!

THE PERFECT PARENT

There is no "perfect" parent. We all make mistakes. There will be times when you won't feel too sure about what you are doing. It takes time, practice and experience to be a parent. But as one new parent put it, "most important is to trust your own judgment and stick to it."

THE PERFECT BABY

There is no "perfect" baby. Each baby is different, looks different, acts different and grows up different from other babies. Your baby will grow at his own pace — don't be disappointed or try to rush him.

Need Help? *Here's where to go —*

La Leche league is an international group of mothers who breast-feed. They can tell you everything you want to know about breast-feeding. They also have written materials for nursing mothers. To get more information or to find out if there is a local La Leche chapter in your community, go to the Internet at http://www.lalecheleague.org or call 1-800-LALECHE.

W.I.C. (Women, Infants and Children) is a food assistance program available to low-income families for some pregnant and nursing women and for children through the age of 5. Call or visit your county health department. If you live in Tennessee, you can call 1-800-342-5942 to find out how to apply.

PublicHealth Departments can give you information on pregnancy, child care, nursing, available child-care centers and answers to general questions. Check in the phone book under your city or county listing for the health department.

National Organization of Mothers of Twins Web site at http://www.nomotc.org/ provides information on twins or other multiple births. To find out whether there is a local chapter, where you can meet with other parents to share information, in your area call 1-877-540-2200.

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission can give you information on safety standards for cribs, toys and other areas of child safety. Visit the Web site at http://www.cpsc.gov/ or call toll free 1-800-638-2772.

Lamaze International can give you information on the Lamaze method of childbirth, a natural method of childbirth. Visit the Web site at http://www.lamaze.org/Default.asp, or call toll free 1-800-368-4404.

Baby Care and Parent Classes may be offered in your community. Contact your local UT Extension office, the local hospital or your health department to see if classes are available.

If you have questions or comments, please contact the Family and Consumer Sciences agent at your county UT Extension office.

COMING NEXT

In — *HEALTHY CHILDREN READY TO LEARN*

- How Will Baby Be Born?
- Where Will Baby Be Born?

PARENTS COMMUNITIES Healthy Children Ready to Learn

HEALTHY CHILDREN READY TO LEARN was originally developed as *PARENT EXPRESS* by the University of California Cooperative Extension Service. The material was adapted for use in Tennessee by Ron Daly, Professor Emeritus, Family Life, and Janie Burney, Assoc. Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences. Contact Denise Brandon, Associate Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences for information about this publication.

RESOURCES

From a Bookstore or Library

Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy. Collins, New York, 2004.

Touchpoints: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development by T. Berry Brazelton, Perseus Publishing, New York, 1992.

What to Expect the First Year, by Arlene Eisenberg, et al., Workman Publishing Co., New York, 1989.

From the Extension Office

How Your Baby Grows: First Trimester, SP441-A, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

How Your Baby Grows: The Second Trimester, SP441-B, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

How Your Baby Grows: The Last Trimester, SP441-C, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

Tips on Breastfeeding: Why Not Breastfeed? SP441-D, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

Tips on Pregnancy: How Much Should I Gain? SP441-E, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

Tips on Pregnancy: Relief from the Discomforts. SP441-F, by Janie Burney, University of Tennessee Extension, 2000.

From the Internet

www.utextension.utk.edu

www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs

www.cyfernet.org

www.parentsaction.org

www.civitas.org

www.zerotothree.org

Visit the UT Extension Web site at
http://www.utextension.utk.edu/ and
the Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at
http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs/

SP418 -3M-1/06(Rev) E12-5315-017-06 06-0144
Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.
UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.