



First Trimester Guide

FOR RADICAL PARENTS

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING





CONGRATULATIONS!
THREE CHEERS!

You're Pregnant!

I believe birth is the most transformative experience available to humans. Birth is a rite of passage and pregnancy is the Preparation phase. There's so many wonderful and exciting things to do and experience during this magical journey. But the truth is that it's not all rainbows and unicorns.

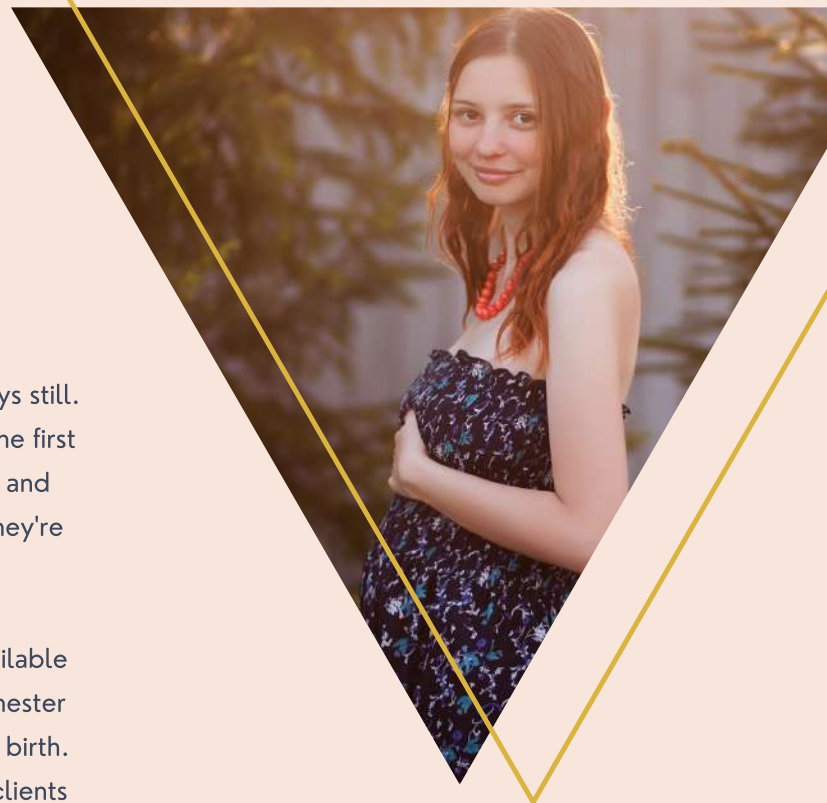
Pregnancy can be challenging. From emotional upheaval to issues of injustice, sometimes navigating pregnancy can feel like walking in a mine field. And a common issue I see with my clients is the sensory overload all these new changes brings.

FIRST THING'S FIRST:
A GUIDE FOR YOUR

First Trimester

If you're reading this, it's safe to assume you're in early days still. Right now, I'm guessing you're kind of in survival mode. The first trimester is EXHAUSTING. And it's a wild ride of emotions and strange physical symptoms. Let's be honest: sometimes they're downright awful.

There are a ton of first trimester guides and checklists available on the internet, but this one is a bit different. My First Trimester Guide is going to prepare you for a totally transformative birth. It focuses on preparing for birth as a rite of passage. My clients who follow this framework have much higher rates of satisfaction with their birth experience.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

AND WHY I MADE IT



This guide starts with an overview of the hormones coursing through your body right now, then common symptoms and simple tips for surviving them. I believe this information is essential to understanding why your body is behaving the way it is. In truth, some of your symptoms are just going to suck no matter what. But when you have a better understanding of how your body is growing this baby, some of these symptoms might be a little more bearable.

Then I'm going to introduce you to the Five Centers of Pregnancy Wellness. When utilizing this framework, my clients feel more nourished and prepared for the ordeal of labor and parenting. This section is all about listening to your intuition, not following some strict eating and exercise regimen and making your entire life revolve around this pregnancy. I know you're busy, friend.

We're going to follow that with a minimal checklist of things to get done in these early weeks. While you will see some of the basics from generic lists, think of all these tasks as the foundation of a radical, transformative birth.

Finally, you'll find a Considerations for Queer and Neurodivergent Folks section. I included this here because I wish someone had told me these things before I went into my own pregnancies. Our experience is immeasurably different from cishet, neurotypical pregnant people. While this list is not exhaustive, it's important to me that my community feels seen and cared for.

If you are experiencing more intense symptoms than those listed or are experiencing oppression in your care, please reach out to me! I'm an advocate for my community and I'd love to support you. My mission is to help wild-hearted, radical, queer and atypical folks have births that feel magical.

HUMAN CHORIONIC GONADOTRIN (HCG)

The hormone that gives you a positive pregnancy test also stimulates the empty egg follicle in your ovary to continue producing progesterone and estrogen throughout your first trimester to help sustain your early pregnancy.



PROGESTERONE

In the early days of pregnancy, progesterone's primary role is to thicken the lining of your uterus to help the embryo implant. It also prevents contractions by slowing down all smooth muscles. Which includes your intestines and joints so you may notice issues like constipation or exercise injuries. It's also the primary culprit in your exhaustion, headaches, chest/breast tenderness and hot flashes.

ESTROGEN

Estrogen's big role in the first trimester is to increase the blood flow in your uterus to aid in the transfer of nutrients to your new baby. Some side effects of this are nausea (yay...), chest/breast tenderness, frequent urination, stuffy nose, and that beautiful pregnancy glow (yay!) It can also increase your sex drive and moodiness.



COMMON SYMPTOMS AND SIMPLE REMEDIES

1

CHEST/BREAST PAIN

The best thing you can do for chest/breast pain is buy yourself a soft, comfortable bra, such as a nursing bra for sleeping. Your tissue has probably grown a lot and will continue to grow so buy one in a size larger than you usually wear.

3

BACKACHE OR CRAMPS

Just like when you get your period, backaches and cramps are common during early pregnancy. You can use a heating pad and see your chiropractor. But you might also do some gentle stretches, like yoga.

5

HEADACHES/MIGRAINES

Unfortunately for regular headache sufferers, headaches tend to pick up during early pregnancy. A common culprit is the increase blood volume in your body. The number one thing we've found to help is chiropractic care! Some essential oils that are known to help are frankincense, peppermint and rosemary.

2

INCREASED CERVICAL MUCUS

One of the first pregnancy symptoms tends to be an increase in cervical mucus. If it's bothering you, a simple panty liner is best. Your run-of-the-mill liners are available just about anywhere, but look into reusables if you're resourced. Period panties are another sustainable option.

4

GAS & CONSTIPATION

The most obnoxious early pregnancy symptom? Probably. The funniest? Debatable. This is caused by a slow-down in your intestines. Eat smaller, fiber-rich meals, eliminate common offenders, drink plenty of water, and exercise. If all else fails, talk to your provider about a stool softener.

6

FATIGUE/ EXHAUSTION

Besides sleeping more, there's not much that will prevent this. Make sure you're eating well, exercising, and taking your prenatal vitamin. Nap frequently and go to bed earlier. Need to get through the day? Check with your provider first, but it's generally considered safe to drink one cup of coffee a day.



INCREASED URINATION

Ahh--there's nothing like waking up every hour to pee, huh? Don't make the mistake of limiting liquids, but you might give yourself an evening cut-off. Lean forward when you pee to make sure your bladder is totally empty.

FOOD CRAVINGS & AVERSIONS

We don't know exactly why we have food cravings. In my experience, practicing intuitive eating can be very helpful during this time. As long as you're eating a balanced diet, don't hesitate to let yourself have small portions of your weird cravings--unless they're non-food related. In that case, talk to your provider!



NAUSEAU

Milder nausea will be helped with real ginger. Peppermint is also great, such as in tea or essential oil form. Peggie Pop Drops or any sour candy helps, as well as eating a handful of cashews. Eat healthy fats and proteins and drink sparking water--trust me!

SPOTTING OR VAGINAL BLEEDING

While terrifying, spotting during early pregnancy is usually totally normal and safe. If you need a panty liner, it's considered bleeding and warrants an immediate call to your provider to be on the safe side. Keep in mind, the majority of birthing people who experience spotting and bleeding go on to have healthy pregnancies.



THE FIVE CENTERS OF PREGNANCY WELLNESS

NURTURING YOUR MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

1

JOYFUL MOVEMENT

Moving your body during the first trimester can feel like a major drag when you're plagued with exhaustion. Simple movements that feel good can actually help decrease that fatigue, though. Walking, swimming, stretching and yoga are all excellent. You can maintain your regular workout routine for as long as it's comfortable, but be mindful of the changing hormonal landscape that can lead to joint issues--and therefore exercise injuries.

2

INTUITIVE EATING

Discussing diet can be extremely triggering for lots of folks, but it's important to understand your actual nutritional needs during pregnancy. There are a lot of myths out there and we'll let a nutritionist debunk those, but it's important for you to know that a strict diet is absolutely not necessary. In fact, it could potentially be harmful for your growing baby. Most people can instead focus on cultivating their intuition around their nourishment needs. Now is a good time to learn to listen to your body as it tells you what it needs, wants and desires.

3

FEED CONNECTION

Whether or not you'd describe yourself as spiritual, nourishing the Spirit during pregnancy is an important task. You're standing at the precipice of a major life transition. Now is the time to grow your community and feed those connections daily. Spending time with other pregnant folks will lead to better birth outcomes. You also want to be mindful to begin building your postpartum community care network. Feed connection with yourself and/or whatever Higher Power you believe in with practices like journaling, meditation, self-care, ritual and Birth Art. Now is also a powerful time to develop and feed connections with your ancestors and their birth practices, as well as any other-than-human entities that you feel drawn to work with, such as spirit guides, the elements or seasonal/astrological correspondences.

THE FIVE CENTERS OF PREGNANCY WELLNESS

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4

DAILY MINDFULNESS

Let's be completely frank: you WILL experience pain and discomfort in your pregnancy, labor and postpartum journey. In my experience, mindfulness is the most powerful tool in your pain coping toolbox. With a basic Breath Awareness exercise, you can reduce uncomfortable sensations like pain and fear and increase your confidence. Building on that mindfulness daily will set you up for success in labor.

5

SENSORY PLAY

Nurturing your senses in pregnancy can increase your satisfaction significantly. It's a great way to connect with your growing body and changing needs, wants and desires. Sensory overload can also be alleviated when you're engaging comforting sensory play. Pedicures, massages, and foot baths are my go-to recommendations for touch play that helps relieve aches and pains. Bubble baths can cover touch and smell if you add some scented bath salts. Nature walks and spending time around fresh plants and flowers--especially if you're getting your hands dirty!--are great for a variety of senses. Nourish your body with tasty, comforting foods while practicing mindfulness to play with taste, smell and sight. Don't forget your fidgets!

Note: I recommend engaging in the Five Centers of Wellness daily or weekly throughout your pregnancy. But it's extremely important not to let this become a chore list that you resent having to perform. The Centers of Wellness are built on the foundations of PLAY and FLOW. Take your outside obligations, lifestyle and capacity into consideration when adding these activities into your calendar. This practice should be a source of nourishment, not stress or shame.

YOUR CARE TEAM

Studies show that your birth outcome is most impacted by the team you choose to be by your side during pregnancy.

- Define your values for birth and parenting to help you choose your support team
- Begin researching doula and birth coach options
- Look into the differences between and midwife and OBGYN
- Research your birthing options at local hospitals, birth centers and home births
- Make any hiring decisions about your birth team and schedule your first appointments
- Begin researching childbirth education classes near you or online and plan on a start date in the second trimester

COMMUNITY CARE

Building your community in pregnancy is absolutely essential! Connect with your people and grow your network.

- Decide when you want to tell people the good news!
- Find a support group in-person and/or online to connect with people in a similar pregnancy stage
- Connect with your pre-existing support network and let them know your social needs
- Begin your postpartum planning now! I know it seems early, but the best way to set yourself up for fourth trimester bliss is to take planning seriously!
- Have you been planning a name change? Consider finalizing before baby is here to make paperwork easier. Check out HitchSwitch

WELLNESS

Set yourself up for success in pregnancy, labor and postpartum by taking your wellness seriously early on.

- Switch to a quality prenatal vitamin if you're not already on one
- If you already have an exercise routine, consider hiring a prenatal personal trainer to evaluate it and make revisions for safety and optimizing performance and gains
- Engage in the Five Centers of Pregnancy Wellness daily or weekly
- Prioritize rest! You're growing a baby and that's hard work
- Don't forget to consider your financial wellness--if you're resourced enough. Save and talk to a financial planner
- Schedule a dental appointment to keep the issues hormonal changes cause in check

MISCELLANEOUS

Knock off these remaining tasks to complete your first trimester checklists! Then treat yourself to some cheesecake.

- Quit unsafe habits. Check with your provider on what is necessary for your lifestyle and ignore the myths!
- Evaluate your health insurance, postpartum leave, vehicle, estate planning, and real estate needs
- Have you been planning a name change? Consider finalizing before baby is here to make paperwork easier. Check out HitchSwitch
- Research your options for prenatal testing and decide what you are comfortable with
- Consider keeping a pregnancy journal and/or taking belly photos to commemorate this transformative time in your life

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR QUEER & NEURODIVERGENT FOLKS



QUEER FOLKS

- Pregnancy can bring on feelings of gender dysphoria for some queer folks. Create a safety plan for dealing with those emotions.
- Trans microaggressions are rampant during pregnancy. Do your research early on to find the most trans-affirming providers and spaces possible.
- Same sex couples need to be aware of birth certificate laws in their state. Connect with LGBTQ+ lawyers in your area.
- Trans and GNC folks may have a difficult time finding pregnancy clothes. Do some searching early to avoid the stress of not having anything to wear later on!

ND FOLKS

- Folks taking psychoactive meds need to talk to their providers about safe use or alternatives. You may not have to give up your meds!
- Sensory overwhelm in pregnancy is REAL. Your interoception may help disguise some of the internal sensations, or it may enhance them. Create a safety plan for dealing with these sensations.
- ND folks have a higher likelihood of depression during the perinatal period. Talk to your provider early on about your treatment options.
- Consider utilizing an advocate as you discuss your concerns with providers. Many ND birthing people report dealing with unsupportive providers and bias in the perinatal period.

ARE YOU READY TO GO DEEPER IN BIRTH PREPARATION?

[BOOK A CONSULT](#)



Hello! My name is Finnley! I'm a trans and autistic coach for wild-hearted, radical, queer, and atypical TTCers, expecting folks, parents, and birth workers.

I want to live in a world where the spectrum of reproductive and parenting choices is honored as transformative, healing, and inclusive. I offer support through the full spectrum of childbearing and child-rearing choices. I also provide skills training for birth workers.

I've served over 250 families in the capacities of birth and postpartum doula, childbirth educator, placenta encapsulation specialist, fertility specialist, bereavement doula,

abortion doula, lactation counselor, and baby planner.

My unique method uses somatic techniques, mindfulness, rewilding and mind/body integration to help people live in Essence. When we can heal and show up more fully, we can shift culture. And when we change birth, we change the world.

Curious? I'm wondering about you, too. Let's chat! Click that Book a Consult button and we can spend some time getting to know each other.