

THE WAITING GAME: BRINGING UP MAMA

When a woman announces that she's pregnant, the first bit of unsolicited advice she receives from her mother, her aunt, her grandmother, and the woman in line at the grocery store is, "Enjoy every minute of your pregnancy—it's the best time of your life." For some, this image of the glowing mother-to-be holds true; for others, the radiance is diminished by sore feet, swollen legs, aching joints, back pains, nausea, acne, hair loss, exhaustion, and, of course, those extra 40 pounds.

Most of these problems have their roots in the physiological changes wrought by pregnancy. Given the enormity of the task at hand—in purely biological terms—it is no wonder that significant strains are placed upon the body. What is surprising is how little most women do to make themselves feel better. In fact, many are reluctant to admit their discomfort. "When I'm asked how I'm feeling and I say lousy, I feel guilty because it sounds like I don't want my baby," says one expectant and uncomfortable woman. "Of course I want my baby, I just don't love being pregnant."

In addition to physical stress, pregnancy can take a toll on the psyche. For some, hormonal changes result in heightened emotions. For others, gaining weight leads to a loss of self-esteem. "In this country, beauty is associated with being thin," notes Dr. Karie McMurray, an obstetrician-gynecologist in West Lake Village, California. "When a pregnant woman gains weight she often feels unattractive." McMurray urges her patients to indulge themselves. "It's important that a woman does what she can to feel good about herself, whether it be putting on new makeup, getting a facial, or relaxing in a bath."

During pregnancy, most women are willing to do—and to forgo—virtually anything for the sake of their babies. Dr.

Judith Brisman, a psychoanalyst who specializes in women's health issues, believes that much of the anxiety some women feel during pregnancy stems from the interruption of daily rituals, like drinking coffee, exercising vigorously, or dieting. "This change in routine can be very disconcerting," she explains, "and can cause a great deal of inner turmoil." She advocates a shift of emphasis. "Instead of focusing on what they can't have or do, women should pay attention to what they really need," says Brisman. "Usually some type of self-nurturing is the answer. People need to listen to the baby in themselves."

When it comes to self-nurturing, massage is high on most people's lists. It can be especially revitalizing for pregnant women, according to Isadora Guggenheim, a licensed New York City massage therapist who specializes in pregnancy massage. "Massage is wonderful not just for physical comfort, but for emotional reassurance as well," says Guggenheim.

Another pampering therapy that can offer special comfort is reflexology. An ancient Eastern technique, reflexology holds that there are specific points in the foot that correspond to every single part of the body. "I'm certified in practically every form of massage," says New York-based reflexologist Laura Norman, author of *Feet First: a Guide to Foot Reflexology* (Simon & Schuster), "and I find reflexology to be the most therapeutic. There are over 7,000 nerves in each foot, so when I massage the area it's very soothing to the nervous system. I can also reach areas like internal organs, that I could never get to through traditional massage." According to Norman, reflexology can help reduce swelling, lessen back strain—even alleviate morning sickness.

With all their attention focused on a new baby, mothers-to-be often neglect themselves. But being pregnant calls for some serious self-indulgence



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