



# Miss manners

It's not just those surprising bodily functions you've got to watch! Falling pregnant can open up a whole new and tricky world of etiquette. **HANNA MARTON** asks the experts how to navigate it

**A**s a mama-to-be, you may be surprised to find yourself facing the moral minefield that pregnancy can be. Just when you're supposed to be calmly looking after yourself and your growing bump, you can't seem to stop thinking of everyone else. How your boss or best friend will react to the news, whether a baby-shower gift registry is tacky, if banning visitors from your hospital bed is okay... you don't want to be offensive, right? Relax! We've had a chat with the etiquette experts so you can coast through your pregnancy without upsetting anyone. Not even the in-laws...

**Q** MY MUM WANTS TO BE AT THE BIRTH, BUT I'D RATHER SHE STAY AT HOME. HOW DO I BREAK IT TO HER GENTLY?

**A** If it's not your cup of tea, quash this idea as early into your pregnancy as possible. Be firm but kind, explaining that giving birth is an intimate occasion for you and your partner, suggests Lucy Perry, doula and author of *Cheers to Childbirth* (Pure Publishing, \$29.95). "Don't take 'no' for an answer. If you think she'll rock up anyway, make sure your midwife or doula is aware that she's not welcome in the birthing suite - they will deal with it." If you have other children, enlist your mum to look after them while you give birth, Lucy suggests. That way she'll still feel like she's part of the process. >

**Q I WANT TO NAME MY SON AFTER MY FATHER - WILL MY FATHER-IN-LAW BE OFFENDED?**

**A** Naming a bub always has the potential to offend family members, particularly if you're turning to family names for inspiration. "Unless you give the baby six names, someone is going to feel left out here," says clinical psychologist Jo Lamble, author of *Answers to everyday questions about relationships* (Penguin, \$19.95). "Although your father-in-law may feel a little envious, I'm sure he'll understand. If your son takes your partner's surname, then his side of the family is already represented." Fair point! There's no need to apologise to your partner's father, as it will only bring more attention to the issue, Jo explains.

**Q I'M NOT PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE ONSLAUGHT OF VISITORS AFTER I'VE GIVEN BIRTH. HOW DO I TELL PEOPLE WE WANT OUR PRIVACY WITHOUT SOUNDING RUDE?**

**A** Well-meaning visitors can be lovely, but if we're being honest, they can also be exhausting. "It sounds harsh, but some birth professionals believe the first 24 hours of your baby's life should not be shared with anyone outside the family," says Lucy. Don't feel bad. Get your partner to announce the birth, explaining you'll let everyone know when you're ready for visitors. "Clarify that this won't be for a few days, and mention it to the midwives so no uninvited visitors bug you," she adds. Once a feeding routine's established and you've caught up on some sleep, consider inviting friends and family to your home one afternoon to meet bub. Think non-ceremonial christening. Ask the in-laws (nicely) to cater. "If you don't want to pass the baby around like a football, hold him close to your chest in a sling," Lucy suggests. Just make sure that beautiful face is on show!

**Q MY FRIEND JUST GAVE HER BABY THE NAME I WAS PLANNING FOR MY BUB! SHOULD I CHANGE MINE?**

**A** Unless it's 'Saccharine Moonflower', it's very unlikely your friend is copying you. Think long-term on this one, advises etiquette expert Anna Musson. "If you choose your second favourite name, are you going to be frustrated for the next 10 years? If you can't bear the thought, stick with your original baby name."

**Q HOW DO I TELL MY FRIEND - WHO HAS EXPERIENCED MULTIPLE MISCARRIAGES - THAT I'M HAVING A BABY?**

**A** Don't expect her to be over the moon, warns Amanda Bowles, co-founder of Bears of Hope, a pregnancy and infant-loss support group. "To break the news, don't post it on Facebook before talking to her or sending a text message. Meet for a coffee, say that you cherish her and want to share your pregnancy with her, but accept that she may need some time to be elated about it." And never complain about being pregnant around her. "Yes, you're sick or tired, but you're truly lucky to carry a little life inside you - something many women want more than anything," Amanda says.

**Q HOW DO I EXPLAIN TO SOMEONE THAT I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THEM TOUCHING MY BELLY?**

**A** Mind the bump! No-one - except maybe your medical caregiver - should just assume they can touch your belly. They wouldn't touch it if you weren't pregnant! When it happens (because it will), light-heartedly comment on how odd it is that everyone fondles your belly without asking, suggests Anna. Hopefully, the friend/distant cousin/total stranger will say, "Oh, don't you like it?" and you can reply sweetly with, "Not really". Doing so will politely, yet firmly, show others how you feel.

**Q WHEN SHOULD I TELL MY BOSS THAT I'M PREGNANT?**

**A** There's no hard and fast rule, explains business etiquette consultant Lady Danielle Di-Masi, though disclosing your pregnancy early on has its benefits. "If you have morning sickness or a troublesome pregnancy, your boss will be more likely to understand," she says. Of course, ask her to be discreet. Not rushing in? Be sure to allow your boss enough time to find a replacement: if you announce the pregnancy two months before your due date, you probably won't get a cake and a card! "Regardless of whether you wait six weeks or six months, show courtesy and make sure your manager is the first person at work to know - you don't want her finding out through someone else or Facebook." Telling your boss is not the same as telling your best mate or sister - depending on your relationship with her, there probably won't be shrieks, hugs or champagne corks popping. "Sure, there's an element of excitement, but it's a business meeting like any other," says Lady Danielle. "You need to be prepared, understand what your obligations are and come to the meeting with a plan."

**Q CAN I EVER ANNOUNCE MY PREGNANCY ON FACEBOOK?**

**A** Update away - once the VIPs in your life have been informed personally. You don't want Auntie Bev getting her knickers in a knot because she found out you're pregnant "on the interweb". And work associates could log on to discover you could be clocking off for maternity leave. "Pre-Facebook, there were six degrees of separation - now there's one degree," says Lady Danielle. "Even if you're not Facebook friends with your boss, you might be friends with someone else who is. Her comment on your big news could appear on your boss' newsfeed." If you're connected with important clients on Facebook, your pregnancy could put them in panic mode. "In business, you need to understand how other people are going to perceive your pregnancy," says Lady Danielle. "Ensure clients know business will continue." ★



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