

MATERNITY WEAR:

HOW TO DRESS FOR DIFFERENT STAGES OF PREGNANCY

INTRODUCTION

When you first become pregnant, you may think that you will have to wear oversized, misshapen, and drab clothing. While this may have been the truth twenty or thirty years ago, these days, maternity fashions have become big business in many fashion circles. Department stores, specialty shops, consignment stores, and online venues carry more sophisticated clothing for those who are expecting.

The need for better maternity clothing evolved for several reasons:

- Many women have careers before becoming pregnant. They do not want to go from the corporate office to the nursery without looking their best.
- Many women still work while they are pregnant and need to look professional at the workplace.
- Women have more money to spend on clothing during this stage in their lives, so they want clothing that will make them look good even during their ninth month.
- Boosting self esteem in order to curb depression during pregnancy is recommended.

Whatever your reasons, you should buy clothing that is stylish, comfortable, and will expand as you do while you are pregnant.

Deciding how much maternity clothing to purchase will depend on:

- Your clothing needs
- Your budget
- Weight gain over the term of the pregnancy
- What you already have in your closet
- What feels comfortable

Women feel comfortable in different types of clothing. Many would rather wear pants, while others would rather wear skirts or dresses. You should choose clothing that will make you feel good about being pregnant.

You should also keep in mind that you will be wearing this clothing for nine months or a little longer depending on how quickly you decide to lose the excess weight. Plan on buying a few nice outfits, a few casual outfits, and undergarments that will make you feel better during the day.

Clothing that is too constrictive will not make you comfortable during your pregnancy. Looser clothing will allow you to grow and will also feel nice when it is close to your skin.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN MATERNITY WEAR

You will begin looking for maternity clothing around your third or fourth month of pregnancy. You may be looking sooner or later depending on when you begin to outgrow your current wardrobe. Keep in mind that you will want to buy clothing that will grow with you. This means buying items that are a little larger now, which will fit better in the coming months.

When looking for maternity clothing, you should consider the following:

- Materials
- Elastic around the waist
- Not tight fitting
- Long enough to offer coverage
- Follows some fashion trends
- Complimentary colors
- Does not appear clownish or childish
- Comfortable shoes
- Comfortable underclothes

You should be able to find quality maternity clothing at the mall, local stores, or online. The only problem you may have when shopping online is that you will have to go by sight alone. Even though there are measurement charts, you will not know how the clothing will feel on the skin. But if you have ordered from the online vendor before, you may know more about the clothing and if it will work while you are pregnant.

The key to maternity wear is comfort. As your body changes, you may find that certain materials may be more irritating than others. Being comfortable during the day will help you be able to function as normally as possible.

MATERNITY WEAR BASICS

Maternity wear basics are clothing that you can mix and match, that you can wear most days of the week, and will fit during most of your pregnancy. When looking for basics, find colors that are complimentary to your skin tone, flatter your figure, and can be worn with different accessories. This will allow you to get the most from your maternity wardrobe.

Below is a list of clothing that you should buy while pregnant. If you need more formal attire for work or for evenings out, there are many more options than ever before.

- ☐ Two or three pairs of dress pants
- ☐ Two or three pairs of casual pants
- ☐ One or two long dresses
- ☐ Four or five casual shirts (short sleeve or long sleeve)
- ☐ Four or five blouses
- ☐ One or two pairs of shorts if pregnant during the summer months
- ☐ Bathing suit if pregnant during the summer months
- ☐ Large winter coat if pregnant during the winter months
- ☐ Undergarments

- ☐ Nursing bra
- ☐ Shoes that are padded and comfortable
- ☐ Slippers/bathrobe/nightclothes

You may need to add more to this list depending on what the weather is like where you live, what you do for a living, and what you feel comfortable wearing.

You should choose natural fabrics such as cotton or silk, or a blend. This will give you room to breathe and the materials are not clingy. If your clothing is getting tighter as the months progress, then you will have to buy a few replacement pieces so that you will have enough clothing to last through your pregnancy.

When buying clothing, it is important to buy clothes that are slightly larger as you will grow into them, especially if you are only in your third or fourth month. Buying clothes that are slightly larger will also feel more comfortable when you are wearing them during the day.

Creating a temporary wardrobe does not have to be difficult as long as you know what you are looking for and are willing to search for it in different ways, either in stores, at yard sales, or online.

PRACTICAL CLOTHING VS. STYLISH CLOTHING

Depending on your job, you will have to find clothing that is appropriate for the workplace. While maternity wear has become more fashionable, you still need to find basic, practical pieces that you can wear in different social situations.

This does not mean that you cannot be stylish while you are pregnant. You will just have to redefine what stylish is. You can follow the colors of certain trends without having to wear skin tight clothing. You can wear trendy accessories without buying belts that are too tight. Taking from trends and creating a comfortable wardrobe is possible.

When choosing between different types of maternity wear, keep in mind the following:

- Do you need more casual wear or professional wear?

- How much are you willing to spend on maternity clothes?
- Do you need more tops or more bottoms?
- How much weight have you gained since becoming pregnant?
- How much weight do you expect to gain?
- How far along are you in your pregnancy?
- Will you need formal wear during your pregnancy?
- Can you find enough basic items to create a wardrobe?

These are questions you will need to ask yourself before you go shopping and while you are shopping. If you are on a limited budget, then you should just get some essential items such as dark colored pants, longer tops, and dresses that you can wear to work or on the weekend.

If you need to wear business attire to work, then you will have to spend a little more money. But you can still just buy a few pairs of slacks and long sleeve blouses to wear to work. Keep in mind that you will only need these clothes for nine months, so you don't have to spend a fortune or buy the latest trends. A classic wardrobe will work just as well.

Find maternity wear catalogs and fashion catalogs and take from both when trying to create a wardrobe. This will be fun and will also allow you to be creative with your clothing. Even if you do not love every outfit you create, the clothing is temporary.

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON MATERNITY WEAR

If you are a tight budget because you are saving money for your new baby, there are ways to find maternity clothing for those months when you need them. Many people want to save their money so that they can provide for their child and for themselves. You do not need to spend a fortune on maternity wear if you do not want to.

With the money you have saved on clothing, you will be able to buy supplies, decorate your baby's room, and have enough left over to add to your wardrobe as you need to later on during your pregnancy.

Below is a list of ways that you can save money:

RUMMAGE THROUGH YOUR CLOSET

If you have any oversized shirts in your closet, then you will not have to buy as many for weekend wear. If you have oversized dresses or pants, these may work as well.

If this is not your first pregnancy, you may still have some maternity clothing left over from last time. Find and air out any old maternity clothing. Check to see that it is in good condition.

Raid your husband's wardrobe as well. He may have several old shirts that he does not want to wear anymore. You should be able to find a lot of casual clothing in here.

ASK FRIENDS AND FAMILY FOR CLOTHING

If you have any friends or family that was pregnant in last few years, ask if they have any maternity clothing they no longer need. This can save you a lot of money. Most people have clothing sitting in their closets that they would really want to get rid of. Instead of donating these items, they can give them to you.

CHECK OUT THE PLUS SIZE SECTION AND THE MEN'S SECTION

Many times the plus size women's fashion section will have great deals on tops and bottoms that you could wear while pregnant. You will find more styles as well as career and active wear. If you are pregnant after the holidays, definitely check out some of the sale items.

The men's section is another great place for oversized shirts.

VISIT DISCOUNT OUTLETS

If on a budget, then skip the department stores and opt for discount retail outlets instead. These stores will have new clothing that will be heavily

discounted because they are last season's styles. You will be able to find all sorts of clothing for work and for the weekend.

YARD SALES AND USED CLOTHING STORES

These are also good places to find maternity wear. While you will not have as big of a selection as in other stores, you will save a lot of money. If you need to buy a few fill in pieces to complete your wardrobe, then these are the perfect places for you.

BUY IN BULK

If you are looking for items like tee-shirts, underwear, and socks, buy in bulk. This will save you money and you can always use extra tee-shirts and underwear, especially as you grow during your pregnancy.

You should also look for seasonal sales, internet sales, and more when shopping for maternity wear. Saving money is a great way to prepare yourself for your new arrival.

HIGH END RETAIL SHOPS

If you can afford to spend more money on maternity wear, there are many specialty shops that will be able to offer you more styles and materials than in other stores. While you find comfortable clothing at these stores as well, you may find more trends present. Try on all clothing before buying any. Think twice before buying:

- Clothing that has too many snaps and buttons
- Clothing that does not contain enough elastic at the waist
- Clothing that shows off too much cleavage
- Clothing in unusual colors
- Clothing that will need to be dry cleaned
- Clothing that is made of scratchy or harsh materials

Just because something is trendy does not mean that it will be comfortable. You should try to strike a balance when shopping for maternity wear.

WHEN TO SHOP FOR MATERNITY WEAR

Unfortunately, not all women can be pregnant after the holidays when the sales are at their best. But this does not mean that you will not be able to find good bargains during the rest of the year.

Look for mid-season sales at department stores and retail outlets. These sales are usually pretty good and you will be able from more available styles than after the holidays. These sales are usually used to promote a seasonal change, so be on the lookout.

Also, look for smaller holiday sales. You will also find great deals at these sales as well.

Specialty shops usually run sales according to the seasons as well. Watch for signs in the windows or sign up for a company newsletter. You will receive email notification that will alert you as to when there will be a sale.

Don't forget about the internet as it can be a good place to find last minute bargains or fill in pieces that you need during your last few months of pregnancy.

Remember that during your first few months of pregnancy, you will be gaining weight, so you may need additional pieces toward the end. Spend your money wisely and make it last throughout the entire pregnancy.

BUYING UNDERGARMENTS AND OTHER ITEMS

UNDERWEAR

Many pregnant women forget that they will also need to buy underwear, bras, and pajamas while pregnant in addition to other clothing. Underwear is a very important component to anyone's wardrobe. You should buy underwear that is comfortable under many different outfits. While you may still want to wear underwear that is fashionable, you should also consider buying some that are less attractive, but very comfortable.

When buying undergarments, you should consider the following:

- Buy cotton or silk
- Check the elastic waistline
- Buy for comfort, not style
- Buy one size bigger

As your belly begins to expand, you will notice increased pressure around your middle section. This could be that the undergarment is cutting off circulation because it is too small. Throughout your pregnancy, you may have to buy several underwear sizes as your body expands. Most women say that the most comfortable underwear is not the most flattering. Buy what feels comfortable for you.

LABOR SKIRT

If you are self conscious and do not want people staring at you while you are in labor, you can buy a labor skirt that will keep you covered up during labor. The skirt fits underneath the belly and can be taken on and off very easily.

NURSING BRAS

During your pregnancy, your breast may begin to leak every now and again. While this is normal, it can also be embarrassing. Buying a nursing bra or nursing pads will solve this problem. Nursing bras have extra padding and an opening for you to easily breastfeed, but they are also made for those who have sensitive breasts.

BATHING SUITS

If you will be spending your summer months as a pregnant mom-to-be, then you will need to buy a maternity bathing suit. As with any other suit, no two

are alike. It is important to try on the suit before you buy it so that you can make sure that it fits properly. When looking for a bathing suit, you should:

- Make sure the suit is long enough to fit your torso
- Make sure the suit stretches enough to comfortably fit your tummy
- Buy a wrap to go with the suit for when you are not in the water
- Make sure the seams on the suit will not fall apart easily
- After trying on the suit, move around to make sure the suit stays in place

Just because you are pregnant does not mean you can't enjoy the water during the summertime. Also, if you are planning on taking water aerobics classes, you will need a swim suit. Swim suits are also great if you just want to lie out in the sun for a while. Just don't forget your sun block.

SHOES

Most people own sneakers, but what about formal shoes while you are pregnant. As you grow, you will want to switch to flats so that you do not lose your balance. When buying shoes, look for the following:

- Shoes that fit well
- Traction on the bottom of the shoes
- Made of leather for added comfortable
- Padding
- Buy slip on shoes as they will be easier to put on as you get larger

If you do not want to spend a fortune on new shoes, then you should buy extra padding so that you will be able to walk around comfortably all day without putting strain on your back, legs, or shoulders.

CLOTHING FOR TRAVEL

If you need to travel while pregnant, you should pack enough clothing to last for the entire trip. This should include one casual dress and one formal dress, shoes, slippers, and comfortable nightwear. Being away from home can cause extra stress, so bring clothing that you really enjoy wearing. This will ease the stress you are feeling by being around items that are comfortable and safe.

MATERNITY WEAR FOR THOSE WHO HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS

If you are having twins, are plus sized, or petite, you will need to buy maternity clothing that will cover you as you progress through your pregnancy.

This is one issue that will need creative answers. You may have to shop in other sections of the store or shop online to find what you need.

TWINS OR MORE

Having twins or more will be evident when you grow out of your clothing quickly during your first trimester. This may seem discouraging at first, but you will learn how to find clothing that will fit.

Begin by buying clothes that are one size bigger. As the months pass, you may have to venture into the plus size section in order to find clothing that will fit. Gaining weight during your pregnancy is normal and should be encouraged. But at the end of your pregnancy, you may not have much left to wear. Borrow clothing from friends and family. This is also a good way to cut back on clothing costs. You should also try shopping online as there are plenty of specialty stores that cater to those who are having twins.

PLUS SIZES

If you are plus sized, the same rules apply. Buy clothing that is one size larger than your regular size when your clothing begins to feel tight. You should keep doing this until you can no longer find clothing that fits. Shopping in the men's section may help you find shirts and other items.

You should also turn to the internet as there are specialty shops that carry many types of maternity clothing. While this may be frustrating at first, you should be able to find enough clothing to last through your pregnancy.

PETITE SIZES

While you may not gain as much weight as an average sized woman, finding petite maternity clothing may be a challenge. Try moving up a size when shopping for clothing that will fit. This should solve the problem.

If you are having problems finding petite clothing in larger sizes, you can also try the juniors plus sized department. They may have more variety and style than some of the other sections in the store.

HOW TO DRESS AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

Once your baby is born, you will not immediately return to your pre-pregnancy weight. This will take diet, exercise, and self control. But just because you are not as thin as you used to be does not mean that you cannot dress fashionably until the weight comes off. There are a few simple ways to dress your body after giving birth.

- Wear your maternity clothes. If you lost a little weight during labor, then you may be able to wear maternity clothing from the early months of your pregnancy. Try everything to see what fits and what doesn't. You should not throw away pre-pregnancy clothing, as you may be able to wear it again.
- Do not settle for just wearing maternity or causal clothing forever. Make goals and stick to them when trying to lose weight. In the meantime, wear clothing that makes you feel confident and proud to be a parent and a woman.
- Look into nursing clothes as an alternative to maternity wear. These clothes will make nursing your baby a lot easier as they are loose fitting and comfortable. Nursing shirts are available in many different colors and styles and you can wear them with pants and skirts.

- Invest in a nursing bra as your breasts will be swollen and may not fit into your other bras.
- When looking for clothing to wear, choose darker colors because they will hide stains, and make your body appear smaller.

Shopping for maternity wear does not have to be a struggle as long as you decide on your budget, where you want to shop, and make a list of all the essential items you will need during pregnancy. Maternity clothing can be stylish and practical at the same time if you know how to put an outfit together using new clothing, used clothing, and oversized clothing.