

MY CUP(S) RUNNETH OVER...



AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE JOYS OF PREGNANCY

God said, “Be fruitful and multiply.” You thought he was referring to mathematical productivity? Nay, *reproductivity* was what he had in mind—and his design for procreation includes remodeling the incubating vessel. That is to say, surprising changes occur in the pregnant body.

The first trimester, your stomach suddenly reacts violently to your previous passion: food. When you step into the grocery store, that seasick feeling assaults you. Food boxes start swimming and colors blur together. People stare as you dash for the door, only to gawk harder as you lose your lunch in the parking lot.

Pregnancy draws you closer to your spouse. During an emergency stop in our driveway while I tossed my cookies in the grass, my husband, Chuck, tried to comfort me. Soon we were throwing up side by side. It was the most romantic thing he’s ever done. Those two brown spots on our lawn were the envy of all my friends.

Your swelling belly and innie-turned-outie navel aren’t the only evolutions in the body’s profile. Average-sized breasts become huge globes that bump into everything. I became emotional once while driving past a field of grazing dairy cows, their enormous udders nearly drag-

ging the ground. In a torrent of hormonally induced empathy, I rolled down my window and raised a clenched fist, shouting, “Hang tough, sisters!”

These alien chest globes take on their own personalities. I called mine Freddie and Flossie after my childhood favorites, the Bobbsey Twins. I addressed them directly: “Freddie, stop bouncing around or I’m going to fall off this bike,” or “Flossie, you have to squeeze into this EE cup—there *is* no F.”

Childbirth classes are an invaluable source of information. At the rural hospital we’d chosen, one young farmer raised his hand the week after we learned about Braxton-Hicks contractions. “Ma’am, my wife’s been miserable all week,” he earnestly addressed the instructor. “Could you tell us about them Briggs and Stratton things again?”

Finally you’re in your ninth month. Ah, but the surprises aren’t over.

After hours of sweating, teeth-grinding, and PUSHing, you’re rewarded with a tiny screaming miracle. The little fellow has a surprisingly strong sucking reflex, and when he latches on, it feels as though a clothespin has gripped this incredibly sensitive part of your anatomy. You’re glad you did that desensitization exercise with the washcloth weeks be-

fore going into labor. Once, after performing this unpleasant terrycloth ritual, I commented to Chuck that it made me sympathize with that old table he was sanding.

“Hmmm. Yes, dear,” he answered, only half listening. I later overheard him authoritatively inform his sister on the phone, “Debbie uses sandpaper on her chest every day.” No wonder his family thinks I’m weird.

It’s a mystery how a baby gets much out of nursing the first few days—it seems like an exercise in futility until the morning you wake up on your stomach, elevated a full six inches off the bed. You’re suspended in midair by two boulders that have replaced the beach balls on your chest. It’s time to learn about the word *engorged*.

And at that first tingle of incoming milk, you grab the baby and insist he chow down heartily, whether he wants to or not. It’s more for your benefit than his. How does that infilling process work anyway? Does God install some internal breaker switch that flips on visual or auditory cue?

Shortly after giving birth, my friend Julia (also a nursing mother) and I decided to take a well-deserved tennis break. Leaving the babies with their daddies, we headed for the courts. The blissful quiet was shattered by a wailing infant in a passing stroller. Julia and I simultaneously clutched our chests like gunshot victims as the familiar rippling rush signaled the incoming milk flood.

“Not now!” I pleaded with The Twins, as two wet spots appeared in strategic positions on my white tennis shirt. Julia and I mopped ourselves between points with a soggy sweatband.

Eventually your prepregnancy body re-emerges, sometimes with a few gravity-assisted alterations. But your healthy toddler is proof that God’s amazing system works. And the next time you consider becoming more fruitful, eat an apple! **tcw**

DEBORA M. COTY, *an occupational therapist, lives with her family in Florida.*

BY DEBORA M. COTY • ILLUSTRATION BY DAN PANOSIAN