

10 Reasons Why **NOW** is the **BEST** Time to Have a Baby!

A lot has changed since our mothers and grandmothers started their families. From diapers to car seats, formula to ultrasounds, right now is absolutely the best time to have a baby, says **Sarah Ludwig Rausch.**

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We give you our top 10 reasons why NOW is really the best time to have a baby...

1. Pain relief. Need we say more? Our choices are better than ever before. In the not-so-distant past, labouring mothers were injected with a combination of morphine and scopolamine, keeping them in a semi-conscious state and leaving them with no memory of the birth. Often, restraints had to be used with this method, called "twilight sleep," since the drugs could cause women to thrash around. Not only are we now able to participate in our babies' births and create our own birth plans, we have pain control options ranging from sitting in the hot tub to massage to low-dose painkillers to epidurals. Plus we're allowed to change our minds about going through labour with no pain relief, as the going gets harder.

2. The Internet. Need to find the perfect baby name? Find out what that wine-coloured spot on baby's skin might be? All you have to do is log on to the worldwide web. Whether you need to know when to start baby on solids or find out when he should be learning to crawl, the Internet has a wealth of available information. You can also keep a blog featuring your precious little one's milestones and pictures to share with all those far away friends and family members.

3. Modern medicine. Babies are being screened for everything from hearing loss to hereditary diseases, giving medical professionals a head start on treatment. Vaccinations for life-threatening illnesses are widely used, keeping our little

ones much safer from sickness than babies a century ago were. Very premature babies who never would have survived in the past are often able to finish their growth in the neonatal intensive care unit. The chance of mothers dying in childbirth is rare these days too. Whereas in the past delivering a baby

could pose a fairly substantial risk of death, mums today don't have that concern. Throw in excellent birth control methods and progressively advancing medical breakthroughs and it's plain that we live in a great time to reproduce.

4. Support, support, support. Parenting magazines, play dates, online groups, your mum friends...the list of available resources for expectant and new mums is abundant. There are

La Leche Leagues and lactation consultants for breastfeeding mothers, nurses available to answer questions with a simple phone call and helpful obstetricians and midwives who are patiently there for every false alarm we might have.

6. Maternity clothes. They're cute, stylish and actually comfortable. When you're already feeling like a walking hippopotamus, a loose-fitting dress really isn't the way to show the world that you're still smoking hot. Designed to hug what's left of your pre-baby body, today's maternity clothes look classy instead of dowdy. No longer are the standard pull-the-waist-above-your-bump pants the only cut available - low-rise pants (and panties) for pregnant women are trendy and surprisingly comfy. It's an excellent excuse to go shopping!

7. Family-oriented delivery rooms. Dads didn't used to be allowed anywhere near the delivery room. Today's delivery rooms are much freer, allowing in anyone the labouring mother wants to participate. Fathers cheer on partners and often cut their babies' cords, a vast difference from how things were done just thirty years ago. Older siblings are encouraged to come meet their new baby brother or sister,

5. Prenatal stuff. Childbirth preparation, breastfeeding classes, prenatal yoga and free samples of diapers and formula are just a few examples of all the perks we have now. It's nice to have some sort of a foggy idea of what to expect once labour starts, as well as an inkling of insight into breastfeeding, though nobody can truly prepare you for these things.

while in the past, children weren't allowed in the nursery.

8. Ultrasounds. Hands down one of the best inventions of the twentieth century, the ultrasound machine has become a staple in maternal care. We are fortunate enough to be able to see our babies before they're even born, and for those of us who can't wait the full nine months, we can find out the baby's gender. Ultrasounds can catch physical defects or problems that the developing baby might have, some of which can even be fixed in utero.

9. Car seats. As annoying as they can sometimes be, and as much as our mothers and mothers-in-law might protest using them - my mother-in-law always insisted that the straps were too tight and bemoaned the injustice of forcing a baby to be in a seat - they have saved many a baby's life. They can also double as a rocker and a good place for baby to occasionally nap. The types that snap into a stroller are particularly handy for going out on errands without having to wake baby.

10. Baby gear. How did yesterday's mums live without Pack-n-Plays, baby monitors, battery-powered swings, stationary play stations, bouncy seats, Baby Einstein and Diaper Genies? The Baby Einstein videos were the only way I was able to get a shower when my boys were babies. That twenty-five minute window was precious and I savoured every second as I scrambled to get in and out as quickly as possible.

We're very fortunate these days. More than once, I've heard grandmas say that they wish they had been able to have the healthcare, baby gear and other perks that we have. We truly live in a world where RIGHT NOW is the best time ever to have a baby. ■