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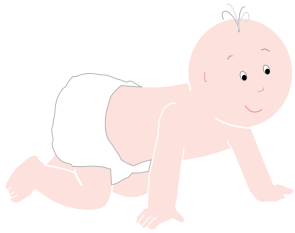
Learning to Love Your Pregnant Body

by Ann Douglas

Expectant mothers tend to fall into one of two distinct camps: those who feel positively goddess-like from the moment the pregnancy test comes back positive and those who are more inclined to view the physical transformation of pregnancy as a necessary evil – the price to be paid for motherhood.

If you find yourself feeling somewhat less than Demi Moore-like these days (i.e. you're more inclined to hide your pregnant body away in some tent-like maternity dress than to volunteer to be photographed in the buff!), perhaps it's because you've yet to discover the unexpected perks that go along with your pregnant status. Here are six great reasons to fall in love with your pregnant body.

1. **Pregnancy is the ultimate disguise for virtually any “figure flaw” that Mother Nature may have thrown your way.** Here's some good news if you've had a love-hate relationship with your body over the years: chances are you'll be able to call a truce during the nine months of your pregnancy. The reason is simple: pregnancy is the ultimate disguise for any “figure flaw” that may be troubling you. Hips too big? Not to worry! They'll look positively svelte in comparison to your blossoming belly. Breasts too small? Not for long! Just wait till those maternal hormones have a chance to work their magic. Carrying a bit of extra padding around your middle? No problem! Everyone will simply assume that you're carrying an extra big baby. There's just one small problem with this pregnancy “disguise”: you have to relinquish it nine months down the road. As much as being pregnant may suit you, you can't be pregnant forever.
2. **The things that are likely to bother you most about your pregnant body aren't likely to be particularly visible to your average guy (or gal) on the street.** Unless you're in the habit of parading around in a bikini – and more power to you, if you continue with that particular mode of dress during pregnancy, by the way! – odds are you won't be flaunting some of the less pretty pregnancy-related body changes to the world: things like stretch marks, the dreaded linea nigra (the brownish crayon-like mark that runs from your belly button to your pubic area), and your newly-popped belly button. And if the only people who'll be able to view these particular changes to your bodily landscape are yourself, your partner, and your doctor or midwife, these things really aren't worth obsessing about anyway, now are they?



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3. **You may not have the body of Julia Roberts right now, but at least you can have her hair.** Imagine nine months without a single bad hair day. If that doesn't do something positive for your self-esteem, frankly, I don't know what will. When you're pregnant, your body stops shedding hair at its usual rate of 100 hairs per day – something that results in a lush, full head of hair that could put any shampoo commercial model to shame. So instead of obsessing about the things about your pregnant body that you could live without, take a moment to appreciate the fact that – from the shoulders up at least – you could be Julia Roberts' body double.

4. **The regular rules of fashion do not apply to pregnant women.** Pregnancy is your chance to be daring – to experiment with your own unique sense of style. It's okay to have fun and look a little eccentric: to put together a one-of-a-kind look by pairing up thrift store finds and items snatched from your partner's side of the closet. So rather than playing by the rules and wearing the same old boring denim jumper as every other pregnant woman in your prenatal class, celebrate your changing body by redefining your sense of fashion. Think "pregnancy chic!"

5. **Everyone loves a pregnant woman.** It doesn't matter what you look like for the next nine months. You're going to be the center of attention as it is. After all, the entire world loves a pregnant woman. So stop obsessing about whether you look "fat" or "pregnant" and vow to enjoy your new-found – and short-lived – celebrity. (I hate to be the one to break it to you, but the spotlight will soon shift from you to your baby, so you might as well enjoy your star billing while it lasts.)

6. **Your body is busy performing a miracle.** And last but not least, we come to the most important reason for learning to love your pregnant body: because of what's going on inside. It's something to think about the next time you're feeling badly about the fact that your waistline has gone AWOL, you seem to be sprouting a new stretch mark everyday, and you haven't seen your feet in months. After all, how can you do anything *but* love your body when it's busy performing a miracle?