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The Last Hurrah

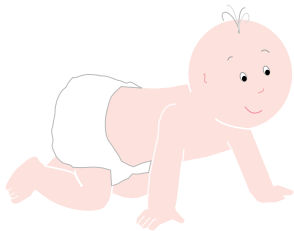
by Ann Douglas

The countdown to motherhood is officially on. At some point during the next few weeks, you will finally get to meet your new baby. While you might be tempted to fast-forward through the rest of your pregnancy in your eagerness to meet the pint-sized passenger who has been hitching a ride in your belly, these final weeks of pregnancy are actually a time to be savored and enjoyed. They are, after all, your last chance to take advantage of the perks of the pre-baby lifestyle – in other words, your last hurrah!

As any veteran mother can tell you, having a baby changes your life forever. While some of the changes are temporary – you won't be pacing the floor at 3:00 a.m. with a fussy newborn forever! – some are practically permanent. (Your chances of maintaining Martha Stewart-like housekeeping standards after baby arrives are, at best, slim to none!)

Here are some experiences you'll definitely want to squeeze in before baby makes his or her grand entrance.

1. **Spontaneous sex.** I don't want to scare you by giving you the impression that the term parenthood is just a fancy euphemism for forced celibacy, but, during the early weeks of your baby's life at least, your odds of enjoying some good, old-fashioned spur-of-the-moment sex are pretty much non-existent. You see, newborns are equipped with a highly sophisticated radar device that tells them when things are about to get hot and heavy between their parents. They're programmed to let out a hearty cry whenever the sparks start to fly in the bedroom. Bottom line? If you only manage to accomplish one of the items on this to-do list this month, make sure this is the one.
2. **Time alone with your partner.** The other thing that quickly disappears when you're struggling to keep up with the demands of a newborn is time alone as a couple. (This only makes sense: after all, you're going from two to three!) That's why it's important to take advantage of the opportunity to spend some time alone together this month. Make breakfast together or flop out on the couch watching all your favorite Saturday-morning home renovations shows. Believe it or not, it won't be long until you're waxing nostalgic about these everyday aspects of couplehood. (It's a rare newborn, after all, who's willing to let his parents tune into back-to-back episodes of *Trading Spaces* without kicking up a bit of a fuss!)
3. **A meal at a fancy restaurant.** Even if you're not particularly into dining out at the types of restaurants that feature white linens and subdued music, make sure you enjoy a dinner out at such an establishment one last time. It won't be long before you start looking for establishments that feature plenty of noisy background music (to drown out the sounds of a fussy baby) and that have a more baby-friendly décor (strained peas do bad things to white linens, after all!), so be sure to seize the moment.



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4. **A night at the movies.** You probably take trips to the movie theater for granted, don't you? Believe it or not, it could be years before you manage to step foot in one of these establishments again. You see, babies and movie theaters don't make a particularly good mix. Either the baby's snuffles and snorts drown out the dialogue in the movie, earning you the wrath of every other movie patron within earshot, or the sound effects of the movie end up frightening the baby. (Remember, newborns come equipped with a very powerful startle reflex!) Unless you're fortunate enough to be blessed with one of those rare babies who come programmed to sleep for 1 1/2 hour stretches, your movie days are probably history for at least the foreseeable future.
5. **An evening out with your girlfriends.** You'll get to see plenty of your girlfriends after the baby arrives. After all, babies have an almost magnetic drawing power when it comes to attracting female visitors. What you might not get to experience for a while, however, is the chance to linger for hours in a dessert café, catching up on your best friends' lives. And even if you manage to get your girlfriends to show up on your doorstep for a late-night tête-à-tête, you'll probably find yourself dozing off each time there's a lull in the conversation. (Believe it or not, the need for sleep can beat out even the juiciest bit of gossip hands down!)
6. **The spiciest meal your pregnant body can handle.** If you're intending to breastfeed your baby, your days of wolfing down jalapeno peppers and sizzling-hot salsa with quiet abandon are definitely numbered. These spices make their way into your breastmilk and can cause a discriminating breastfed baby to go on a nursing strike. (Trust me: this is one labor negotiation you'll definitely want to avoid!)
7. **The chance to play Demi Moore.** You don't have to strip down to the buff – unless, of course, you want to! – but you should definitely plan to pose for the camera at least once during the final homestretch of pregnancy. It won't be long before your huge belly is but a memory. Make sure you have some photos that capture this magical time in your life.
8. **The chance to sleep in.** Sleep: it's the stuff of which new parents' dreams are made. Don't miss the opportunity to sleep in as often and as late as possible during these last few weeks of pregnancy. The Sandman is about to pack his bags and leave town!
9. **A nice, warm bubblebath.** It may not seem like a big deal now, but you'll thank me for encouraging you to squeeze in one last bubblebath later on. In just a few short weeks, it'll be darned near impossible for you to find an hour or two to bury yourself in the bubbles, trashy novel in hand.
10. **Time to write a love letter.** Take a moment to write a very special type of love letter – a love letter to your baby-to-be. Let your baby know about all your hopes and dreams for him. Better yet, make your letter the first entry in a journal chronicling the amazing journey you're about to make – the journey to motherhood. And while you're at it, dash off a few lines to your partner. Let him know that the rules of the game may be about to change, but you'll always be on the same team.