

**THE  
GALLAGHER GUIDE  
TO THE  
BABY YEARS**



**THE REAL MOMS' SURVEY  
OF TOP-RATED  
PRODUCTS AND ADVICE**

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# CONTENTS

## **INTRODUCTION XIII**

### **CHAPTER ONE: PREGNANCY 1**

- The Five Most Effective Ways to Cope with Morning Sickness 1
- Nine Easy Ways 3
- Your Essential Maternity Wardrobe 4
- The Five Hottest Places to Buy Maternity Clothes 6
- Our Seven-Step Formula for Coping with Bed Rest 8
- Four Scrumptious, Healthy Pregnancy Snacks 10
- The No-Lose Way to Pick the Perfect Baby Name 12

### **CHAPTER TWO: THE ESSENTIAL NURSERY 15**

- The Five Most Important Items for Your Baby's Nursery 15
- What Else to Buy 21
- Where to Buy It All 22

### **CHAPTER THREE: BABY GEAR 25**

- Infant Car Seats 25
- Strollers 29
- High Chair 32
- Baby Products 34
- What Else You Will Need 38
- Baby Clothes 39
- Where to Get Baby Gear 41
- Shopping Online 42

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DELIVERY AND BEYOND 45**

- Preparing for the Big Day 46
- What to Bring to the Hospital 48
- Your Wardrobe After the Baby Is Born 50
- Now About Those Extra Pounds 52
- Coming Home 53

## **CHAPTER FIVE: BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS, BABY NAMINGS, AND BAPTISMS, OH MY! 57**

- The Eight Most Creative Ways to Announce  
Your Baby's Birth 57
- The Five Easiest Ways to Get Your Birth Announcements  
Done Fast 60
- Secrets for Planning a Stress-Free Baptism, Bris, Baby  
Naming, or Christening 61
- The Simple, Four-Step, No-Hassle Plan for Getting Thank-  
You Notes Done Fast 63

## **CHAPTER SIX: TAKING CARE OF MOMMY 67**

- Getting a Shower 68
- Dealing with the Onslaught of Unwanted Advice 69
- Time for You 72
- Coping with Sleep Deprivation 74
- Getting Daddy to Help 78

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: TAKING CARE OF BABY 81**

- Burping 84
- Constipation 85
- Bathing 87
- Sleep 89
- Coping with an Early Wake-Up Time 90
- Seven Foolproof Tricks for Getting Baby to Nap 92

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: FOOD AND NUTRITION 95**

- Breastfeeding 95
- Bottlefeeding 102
- Formula 103
- Baby's First Cup 104

Baby Food 105  
Finger Foods 106  
Healthy Snacks 107  
Vegetables 108  
Dealing with a Picky Eater 112

## **CHAPTER NINE: CHILD CARE 115**

Our Simple Five-Step Plan for Finding Great Child Care 115  
Five Steps to Zeroing In on a Good Day Care Center  
or Day Care Home 118  
How to Interview a Nanny or an Au Pair 123  
Making the Transition 125

## **CHAPTER TEN: SAVING MONEY 129**

Our Number One, Ultimate Source for Saving Money on Baby  
Clothes, Gear, Books, Toys, and Just About Everything Else 129  
The Six Simplest Ways to Save Money on  
Nursery Essentials 130  
Nine Clever Strategies to Avoid Overpaying for  
Baby Gear, Clothes, Books, and Toys 132  
Our Nine Best Tips for Saving Money on  
Child Care and Babysitting 134  
The Single Easiest, Most Effortless Way to Save  
for College 137

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN: GETTING ORGANIZED 139**

Saving Time in the Morning 139  
So What Do You Do with All that Stuff? 143  
Getting Stains Out of Kids' Clothes 144  
Storing and Displaying Kids' Artwork 145  
Saving Time in the Evening 148  
Getting Dinner on the Table Fast 150

## **CHAPTER TWELVE: ENTERTAINMENT 155**

Toys 155  
Books 157  
Music 158  
Television/Videos 160

## **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: SICKNESS AND HEALTH 163**

Teething 163

When They Get Sick 165

Taking Baby's Temperature 165

When Baby Has a Cold 166

Getting Them to Take Medicine 168

Getting a Good Night's Rest When They Are Sick 169

Brushing Teeth 170

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: MAKING AND PRESERVING MEMORIES 173**

Fifteen Fabulous Ways to Have Fun with Your Little One 173

Birthday Parties 176

Preserving Memories 178

Pictures 181

## **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: TODDLERS 183**

Our Five Best Ideas for Getting Rid of the Pacifier 184

Three Strategies for Stopping Thumb-Sucking 186

Three Ways to Make an Easy Leap from the Crib to a Bed 187

The Quick and Easy Way to Potty Training 188

Monsters, Clowns, Costumed Characters, and

Other Scary Stuff 192

## **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: READY FOR ANOTHER ONE? 195**

Our Four Best Tips When Trying to Conceive and

It's Taking Longer than Expected 195

Five Smart Ways to Take Care of Yourself When You Are

Pregnant and Have Little One(s) in Tow 197

Breaking the News to Your Kids That a New

Baby Is on the Way 198

## **THE TOP TEN WAYS YOU KNOW YOU'VE BECOME A MOM 199**

## **MEET OUR CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS 203**

## **INDEX 000**

## TAKING CARE OF MOMMY

**S**o is this motherhood gig what you expected? Long, lazy mornings spent nuzzling your sweet little angel, then letting him sleep contentedly, while you do a household project or catch up with old friends on the phone? Not exactly? Yeah, that stuff is only for diaper commercials or TV sitcoms where the TV mom (who doesn't even really have kids) gets a staff of twenty to do her hair and makeup every day.

The good news is motherhood *is* just about the most exhilarating and enriching experience you'll ever have. *Really*. You just have to get to the point where at three in the afternoon you can say with absolute certainty, that you did, in fact, brush your teeth today. And, honestly, it won't be long before that day comes.

In the meantime, we'll give you the skinny on taking care of yourself. We're talking just the basics here, like how to get a shower when your breasts are engorged, your phone is ringing off the hook, and you don't know whether the baby will wake up wailing for food in two minutes or twenty. Like what to say to those incredibly annoying (yet well-meaning) relatives who insist on sharing their pearls of child-rearing wisdom with you on a daily basis. Like how to cope with the stresses of new motherhood, make sure you get the maximum sleep possible, and most important of all, get daddy to pitch in and help.

## Getting a Shower

You'd think this would be no big deal. After all, they are just babies. It's not like they're going to unlock your front door and go play in the street if you take a five-minute shower. But getting a shower on a regular basis was one of the most challenging tasks we faced as new moms. Here's what we discovered.

### FOUR SIMPLE TIPS FOR GETTING A SHOWER EVERY DAY

1. Put the baby in a swing or bouncy seat in the bathroom with you.
2. Do it while the baby's sleeping.
3. Do it when your husband is home or when a friend or relative can come over and watch the baby.
4. Bring the baby in the shower with you.

"My children loved the hum of the shower, so I'd take them into the bathroom with me. They would sit in a bouncy seat and look around, while mom took the fastest showers in history! When I'd get out, I'd have to hurry up and start blow-drying my hair, because they liked the hum of that, too."

—*Tracy Pritchard, Kyle, TX*

"I sure remember those days! I usually tried to get a shower when they napped or put them in the bouncy seat in the bathroom. When my son was older, I put him in the playpen with a video on. I don't think I rinsed all of the shampoo out most of the time, because I was always just trying to hurry up and get out."

—*Anna Marie Menta, Clifton Heights, PA*

"Before the baby is even born, or as soon as you think of it afterward, figure out the best time of day for your partner to watch the baby while you shower. Don't expect him to think about the fact that you need one, unless you get really stinky! Fifteen minutes in

the shower can do you so much good, both mentally and physically. For the first eighteen months of my son's life, it was my daily escape from the demands of motherhood."

—*Rachel Hulan, Lake Forest, CA*

"I wait until my husband gets home from work. He can spend some time with our daughter playing, bonding, reading, etc., while I get some 'me' time."

—*Melissa Best, Avella, PA*

## **Dealing with the Onslaught of Unwanted Advice**

We got so much unsolicited advice as new moms that many of us felt as if we had been brandished with an invisible sign that said, "New Mom: Feel Free to Dump All Your Beliefs, Judgements, and Opinions About Child-Rearing on Me."

The worst offenders by far were well-meaning relatives. They questioned and challenged everything we did, from breastfeeding (or not) to sleeping with the baby (or not), using the pacifier (or not), taking the baby out too often (or not at all), and on and on.

In a moment, we'll share with you the best ways to cope with this advice—what, specifically, to do and say—but first we want to remind you that these are people who mean well. It's hard to put yourself in their position, but let's try to look at the situation a little differently.

Think about all the grief you're enduring now over, say, your decision to breastfeed. You know it's the right choice for you and your baby, but your mother swears you were exclusively formula-fed and turned out just fine. Moreover, she thinks breastfeeding is "yucky" and that you shouldn't do it in public.

This annoys you to no end, especially since you struggled for weeks before getting the hang of it. At first, your nipples were sore and you worried the baby

wasn't gaining weight. Now, even though everybody claims breastfeeding burns a lot of calories, your body seems to be hanging on to those last ten pounds for dear life. You've had to deal with nasty comments from relatives and total strangers when you feed your baby in public, not to mention incomparable sleep deprivation and an inability to go anywhere by yourself for more than an hour and a half at a time. Still, you are delighted to be able to provide your baby with this ideal form of nourishment and the lifelong health benefits breastfeeding offers.

Now let's fast forward. Pretend that after all this, your daughter, the one you nursed for a year, is now grown up and pregnant with her own daughter. When you ask her about breastfeeding, she wrinkles her nose and says, "No way," making it clear the topic is not open for discussion. Would you keep your mouth shut? Would you just say, "Oh, I didn't realize you felt that way," and leave it at that? Probably not.

That's how your mother and mother-in-law feel now. Sure, times have changed and what worked for them may not work for you. Heck, it may even now be considered dangerous (think tummy sleeping, no car seats, and, my personal favorite, walkers). But the bottom line is: They were new moms once, too. And they struggled with sleep deprivation, sickness, and many of the same things you're struggling with now. They also love you and want the best for you and your baby (their grandchild), so it's only natural that they want to share what they've learned.

It helps if you appreciate their perspective, but they still need to respect that you are the mother, and you and your husband are the only ones who get votes in how to raise your child. They can suggest, they can comment, but the decisions are yours and yours alone. Here's how we recommend setting boundaries with meddling relatives.

## THE FIVE EASIEST WAYS TO DEAL WITH UNWANTED ADVICE AND INTRUSIONS

1. Make it clear that you need to make these choices and mistakes by yourself.
2. Thank them for their advice. Then do what you want anyway without explanation.
3. Avoid discussions about your parenting choices. Change the subject when it comes up.
4. Tell them the doctor told you to do it this way.
5. Join a support group of other new moms and vent!

“Adopt a ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy. Keep it social unless you’re discussing this with someone whom you know will understand.”

—*Brenda Brown, Kapolei, HI*

“Remember that many things that mothers and mothers-in-law say to you contain outdated advice or are a trip down memory lane for them. Boy, do the stories change after thirty years. Gee, did you know my husband walked at seven months? Each decade, he became a month more advanced. It’s probably highly unlikely that he walked before nine or ten months, but there’s no use ruining a good legend in his family.”

—*Brenda Dintiman, M.D., Fairfax, VA*

“Say, ‘I know I am a new mom, but I would like to learn what my baby likes on my own.’”

—*Alisa Norris, Plano, TX*

“A lot of times I will say something like, ‘Ah, isn’t that interesting. I’ll have to look into that’ or something equally noncommittal. That way, I am not starting an argument, but I am not committing to following their advice either.”

—*Heather Meininger, Charlotte, NC*

“The easiest thing to tell people is, ‘The pediatrician told us that—— is fine or okay.’ That one sentence helps with most

questions. Also, just smile and say something like, 'Oh, that's something to think about.'"

—*Kris Rivas, Denver, CO*

"Smile politely, but refuse to back up/defend your choices in parenting. Citing examples/studies makes family members think that your parenting method is up for discussion. Just nod and try to change the subject as soon as possible."

—*Rachel Bailey, Bay Minette, AL*

## Time for You

### HOW TO HANDLE IT WHEN YOU'RE SICK OF PLAYING PEEK-A-BOO, CAN'T FACE ANOTHER LOAD OF LAUNDRY, AND JUST WANT TO ESCAPE

Your first instinct as a new mom is to do everything you can to make your baby happy and comfortable. And naturally, that's important. But it's also important to take care of yourself. In fact, in our experience, the happiest, most well-taken-care-of mommies have the happiest and most well-cared-for babies. It's true! So put your needs first: It's good for you and your baby. Here's how.

### FIVE SECRETS OF THE MOST RELAXED AND ENERGETIC NEW MOMS

1. Get out of the house.
2. When daddy comes home, take mommy time.
3. Do something you enjoy **BY YOURSELF**.
4. Schedule a regular period of time for yourself every day.
5. Connect with other moms.

"Leave the house. Twofold reason: It calms the baby down just by driving around, and other people always manage to put things

into perspective for you when they see the baby in the park or the market and say, "What a beautiful baby!" I just love to have a conversation with an adult with whom I couldn't agree more."

—*Michelle Gebhard, D.O., White Plains, NY*

"I take little breaks whenever I can. I hire a mother's helper to hold the baby while I take a bath, or I'll go out for coffee for an hour and leave the baby with my husband. Time away, out of the house, is truly necessary from time to time."

—*Stacey Sklar, Oakland, CA*

"Attempt to plan activities for yourself while your husband watches the kids. Whether it is a trip to the library or a chance to go for a walk or a half hour to sit and read in peace, these times are SO vital to your well-being. I think it is important for every mom to have a little of this time every day. It gives you a break and allows you to be a better mom in the long run, since you will feel more refreshed after a break."

—*Jana Bell, London, OH*

"Talk to other moms. This was a lifesaver for me. It helps put things into perspective. Other moms know what you are going through and can offer advice. I would also recommend setting aside at least thirty minutes a day for yourself. This will help maintain your individuality. New moms need to remember that they are people, too."

—*Desiree Bochman, Paradise, CA*

"Ask a friend or family member to watch the baby, even just for an hour, once a week to start. Take a walk, get outside, get a haircut, do something fun. Moms also need time with their partners to be a couple—without the baby. Try for once a week to have a date. Any small amount of exercise is good, too."

—*Krystal Johnston, M.D. Manistee, MI*

"Make sure you can plan a day just for you, at least once a month. Mine was going to the salon to have my hair cut and col-

ored. It was so nice to get away and relax while being pampered. And then you look like a new person when you leave!”

—*Katie Conroy, Palos Hills, IL*

“I go to a coffee shop or have lunch at a restaurant (yes, even alone) where I don’t have to unwrap my food.”

—*Sara Dixon, Grimesland, NC*

“At first this will be hard to do, but I recommend trying to get up about an hour earlier than everyone else to read/exercise/sip coffee, etc. It will make your day go much more smoothly, and you won’t feel so deprived by the end of the day.”

—*Rachel Bailey, Bay Minette, AL*

## Coping with Sleep Deprivation

Have you noticed that the very same people who tell you to sleep when the baby sleeps also advise you to pretreat spit-up stains immediately and expect you to serve them refreshments (and clean up) when they visit? They don’t seem to understand (or remember) what new motherhood is like.

Before we had our babies, we thought sleeping when the baby slept would be no big deal. We imagined the schedule would go something like this:

1. Baby wakes.
2. Feed the baby.
3. Play with the baby.
4. Put baby down for a nap.
5. Take a nap, clean the house, prepare dinner, do a craft project, paint the living room, etc.

In reality, it was more like this:

1. Baby wakes.
2. Feed the baby.
3. Spend ten minutes coaxing a burp out of gassy baby.

4. Change baby's diaper.
5. Carry baby around the house, while attempting to accomplish something, like wash a glass that is so cruddy, it is starting to grow mold.
6. Baby cries.
7. Try to soothe baby with assorted tricks—swaddling, bouncing, etc. Is she hungry again?
8. Repeat steps 2 through 6.
9. Baby falls asleep—finally!
10. Mommy runs around the house like a maniac, trying to figure out what to do first with these blessed moments of freedom—after all, who knows how long they'll last?

The problem is there is so much to do and nap time is the perfect time to get it all done. At first, you can't wait until nap time to get a peaceful shower, return the twenty phone messages that were left on your answering machine, or wash last night's dinner dishes. Later, when you come down from the adrenaline high of the first days of motherhood, you feel so exhausted and overwhelmed, you don't allow yourself to sleep because there is so much to be done around the house—the laundry, the dishes, the trash, the baby announcements, etc.

There's no way around it: Motherhood is a big job. The problem is you can't do it well if you aren't rested. Luckily, there are some important tricks you can use to make sure you get your rest. The key is to make sleep your top priority. You may have noticed we've mentioned this before. **THAT'S BECAUSE IT'S REALLY, REALLY IMPORTANT.** Ahem. Not trying to scream here, but we want to make sure you get the message: Baby care is number one. Sleep is number two. Get it? Good. Here's how to make that happen in the real world.

## THE EIGHT EASIEST WAYS TO MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR SLEEP

1. Take turns with your partner getting up at night.
2. Let the house go; lower your standards for what chores need to be done, how well and how fast.
3. If you must do chores, do them for a limited time, then rest, or rest first and set an alarm to wake up and do chores.
4. Put the baby in a sling, baby carrier, playpen, or other safe place and do chores while he or she is awake, then rest while the baby is napping.
5. Have friends or relatives come over to watch the baby so you can nap, or hire a sitter so you can sleep—really!
6. Cosleep or keep the baby close by in your room at night, which can shorten nighttime interruptions.
7. Splurge on a cleaning service, baby nurse, or nanny to get you through the first few weeks or months.
8. Nap with the baby.

“Have your husband take over baby duties for a while so you can nap. Take turns getting up at night. If you are nursing, leave a bottle of breast milk for him to feed the baby.”

—*Amy McDonald, Buffalo, MN*

“Find a way to get one solid block of sleep every twenty-four hours. Husbands are notoriously bad at getting up in the middle of the night, but mine was willing to do feedings in the late evening, when he was up anyway. So I’d go to bed at 8, and he’d do any feedings that happened before midnight, when he went to bed. If he fed the baby right at 12, I could usually sleep until about 2. Six hours of uninterrupted sleep—WOW!

“Many babies will go back to sleep for an hour or two after they first wake up/eat/play in the morning (mine did it until he was six months old). So I would always go right back to bed

when he did. Those extra two hours were a lifesaver after a short night."

—*Gail Vold Greco, Minneapolis, MN*

"When the baby was sleeping, I set an alarm for twenty minutes. I did all I could in that twenty minutes and then I rested. I did that each and every time she slept throughout the day, and by the end of the day, I had done what I needed to do. With two now, it can be a little harder, but I still do the twenty-minute thing and then have the older one rest with mom."

—*Ange Gregory, Stanwood, IA*

"Babies usually take more than one nap a day, so decide if you are going to do chores during the morning or afternoon nap. Then stick with the plan. Nap at least one time with the baby, and then you will probably be able to stay up a little later in the evening. I also paid a neighborhood girl to come to my house and watch the baby while I went up to my bedroom for a nap. I couldn't afford to do that every day, but it was well worth it on the days when I was feeling extremely overwhelmed and exhausted."

—*Lori Stussie, Lawrence, KS*

"Hire help. Either to clean, do the laundry, cook, etc., or to hold the baby while you do the work. Take advantage of all the visitors to either hold the baby while you get stuff done or to help bring you meals. Lower your standards and find ways to multitask whenever you can. Get a Baby Björn [carrier] to put the baby in and have him or her strapped to you while you do things around the house. Go to bed at 7 or 8 p.m. for a few months. Your husband and the TV can live without you while you try to get a few moments of sleep."

—*Stacey Stevens, Alamo, CA*

"Cosleep, especially if you are nursing. It makes things much easier. Rather than being woken up by a baby crying on the monitor, your baby is right there. You'll be able to respond quicker and get baby back to sleep sooner, giving you more time to sleep, too."

—*Colleen Grace Weaver, San Lorenzo, CA*

## Getting Daddy to Help

The first and most important thing you must realize about new dads is that they generally want to help. In fact, helping can make a new dad feel needed, competent, and loved. Really—it's a good thing. The problem is most new dads don't automatically jump up first to change a diaper, comfort a crying baby, or wash the dishes. Truth be told, most of the time they don't even notice. That doesn't make them self-centered or wrong; it makes them *dads*, not moms. So here's how to make sure you get the help you need without nagging or complaining.

### SEVEN EFFORTLESS STEPS TO GETTING MORE HELP FROM DADDY

1. Realize and acknowledge that he is feeling stress, too.
2. Be honest about how overwhelmed and scared you are.
3. Assume that he will automatically take on the responsibility. Don't ask for permission; just act like it's his job.
4. Make specific requests, so he knows exactly what you want.
5. Let him do things in his own way. Never nag or criticize!
6. Make it a point to show your appreciation for everything he does.
7. Encourage him to have a special bonding ritual with the baby that doesn't involve you.

"From what I've learned, most men won't offer. Hand the baby to them, and tell them what a wonderful job they are doing."

—Missi Darnell, Acton, CA

"It's often difficult for new moms to let their babies go into their husband's 'inexperienced' hands. But I promise you, it is well

worth it. Dads are a lot smarter than we give them credit for, and many times will not do things for the baby if mom is there to do them first. Leave your baby for short periods of time with your husband (you can still be in the house, just don't come to their 'rescue' every time baby whimpers). You will be surprised how quickly and how much he learns about what and how to do things for your baby. Trust him, and let him know you trust him."

—*Rachel Bailey, Bay Minette, AL*

"I have a husband who helps, but not the way I want it done. I have tried very hard to realize that our daughter is safe and happy even if the towel is sitting on the floor instead of on the back of the door. Most men need to be asked, as I don't think they have a clue as to what to do. And asking makes them feel wanted. The baby is not the main focus of their time, and men seem to feel left out of a lot of the activities."

—*Kristin Townsend, Springboro, OH*

"Sometimes I had to beg and cry. He saw me as the perfect mother, able to handle everything and all-knowing. I think part of this persona was created by my inability to admit that I was scared, unsure, and more than a little overwhelmed. I had to be honest with him and show him how scared and overwhelmed I was (as well as exhausted) before he understood he needed to really step up to the plate. It was a hard first few weeks. The hardest was the night that we started fighting about who was more tired than the other. Me, because I'm taking care of the baby all day and all night or him because he's working. He did need to help more, and we finally created a compromise, though it took some time and a few arguments."

—*Jennifer Weintraub, Dallas, TX*

"My husband was wonderful. He helped out so much. The hardest part was not critiquing the way he was doing things. Men just do things differently, and I had to accept the fact that as long as it was getting done, it didn't matter HOW it was getting done."

—*Sherry Rennie, Rialto, CA*

“Let him feel part of the mom and baby world, rather than an outsider. If he’s off at work, call him and let him listen to the baby. If he’s at home, show him that he is as important to the baby as you are by showing him that you trust him 100 percent with the baby.

“One of the biggest complaints I hear from guys I know with new babies is that they feel their wives are overprotective of the baby, even when they are in charge. It’s hard to let go, because you took care of this baby for nine months [in the womb], but I think it’s beyond important to show daddy that he is needed, and make him know that you appreciate his helping.”

—*Valerie Downs, Altoona, PA*

## Looking for More Information?

The Gallagher Guide to the Baby Years is the only book to offer practical solutions, ranked and rated by the true experts: other moms who've been where you are now.

We've park-tested strollers for durability and sound-tested children's music for listenability. We taste-tested baby food and shrink tested maternity clothes. And we reveal all the results in The Gallagher Guide to the Baby Years: The Real Moms' Survey of Top-Rated Products and Advice.

Here's a sampling of the tips and tricks you'll discover when you buy The Gallagher Guide to the Baby Years:

- \* Ten low-stress ways to get ready for labor and delivery
- \* The one thing you must check before settling on a baby name
- \* How to make your first weeks home as easy as possible
- \* Eight super-creative ways to announce your baby's birth
- \* Five habits of the most relaxed and energetic new moms
- \* A doctor mom's secret remedy for curing nursing soreness in a flash
- \* Where to find name-brand bedding, furniture and accessories at discount prices
- \* A five-step plan for finding great day care
- \* Cool solutions for storing kids' toys and stuff
- \* Incredible tools for time-crunched moms
- \* Powerful strategies for getting baby to sleep through the night and much, much more.

Please visit [www.gallagherguide.com](http://www.gallagherguide.com) to purchase your own copy of The Gallagher Guide to the Baby Years today.

## Know Someone Else Who's Pregnant or Just Had a Baby?

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