

The Mama Natural Week-by-Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth

Genevieve Howland

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With more than 1.3 million video views each month and over fifty-two million total views on her YouTube channel, Howland's (a.k.a. Mama Natural) funny but informational videos have empowered millions of women to embrace natural pregnancy and parenting. Now Howland is turning to the page, offering up the *first* week-by-week natural pregnancy book for soon-to-be moms.

For the last half-century, control over childbirth has been in favor of doctors. Many pregnancy guidebooks are conventional, fear-based, and written by male physicians deeply entrenched in the old-school medical model of birth.

But change is underway. A groundswell of women are taking back their pregnancy and childbirth and embracing a natural way. Genevieve Howland, the woman behind the enormously popular *Mama Natural* blog and YouTube channel, has created an inspiring, fun, and informative guide that demystifies natural pregnancy and walks mom through the process one week at a time.

The Mama Natural's Week-by-Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth is the modern (and yet ancient) approach to pregnancy and childbirth. "Natural" recognizes that pregnancy and birth are normal, and that having a baby is a wondrous biological process and rite of passage—not a medical condition. This book draws upon the latest research showing how beneficial and life-changing natural birth is for both babies and moms.

Full of weekly advice and tips for a healthy pregnancy, Howland details vital nutrition to take, natural remedies for common and troublesome symptoms, as well as the appropriate (and inappropriate) use of interventions.

Peppered throughout are positive birth and pregnancy stories from women of all backgrounds (and all stages of their natural journey) along with advice and insights from a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) plus a Registered Nurse (RN), doula, and lactation consultant. Encouraging, well-researched, and fun, *The Mama Natural's Week-by-Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth* will be an essential companion for women everywhere to embrace natural pregnancy and reap all the benefits for both baby and mama.

The Mama Natural Week-by-Week Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth Details

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Jess says

So I didn't quite finish this one. In fact, I got through Week 38 and put it down (with every intention of coming back to finish), but I was wrapped up in reading some other books and getting prepped for the arrival of baby. That was at about week 35 for me; at week 38 I went into labor. Yes, intuitively reading only as far as I got in my own pregnancy!

All kidding aside, I found the book helpful. While I didn't follow all of Howland's advice, it was nice to give me ideas about what I should even be thinking about. I was very lucky to have a very normal, healthy pregnancy, so I read this book more as suggestions than guidelines. I appreciated the weekly updates on what's going on with baby and mama (though be aware, you may never experience some of them - everyone's pregnancy is different!).

We have a very corporate, cookie-cutter health insurance, so this book also really helped to sell us on the value of hiring a doula for labor. It was so helpful for both my husband and myself to have another woman who had been there many times before with us. We would definitely repeat that if we're lucky enough to have a second child.

Niki Shirkman says

I LOVED this book. This is my third pregnancy (one miscarriage), and it is everything I was looking for during my first two pregnancies but didn't find.

The format of the book was great. It is a week-by-week guide, with the first page of each week sharing "what's up with baby?" and "what's up with Mama?" during that specific week. I would save that page to read for when I hit that week in pregnancy, but continued on with the rest of the chapter because those pages aren't necessarily specific to that week.

WHAT I LIKED:

- this book is for ANY woman who is pregnant, not *just* those wanting to go natural
- Howland provides an incredibly fair, honest and realistic picture of pregnancy and L&D from many perspectives
- covers a wide variety of topics and conversations
- it never felt pushy or forceful about an opinion or way of doing something; never trying to make you feel guilty or like you "should" be doing something
- some opinions or advice in the crunchy world don't always have many studies or hard science to back them up (yet). I really appreciate that Howland acknowledges this where relevant and doesn't try to state facts if they aren't facts, but instead shares conclusions she's come to from her own experience and input from others.
- I love the recipes throughout the book. A range of entrees, snacks, drinks and sweet treats.
- the design is pretty and overall well-done. Beautiful illustrations rather than actual pictures made for a "cozy" feel to the book.
- I went natural with my first baby and this book made me feel even more confident and empowered in my resolve to do so again.

WHAT I DIDN'T LIKE:

- I truly can't think of something I didn't like, other than the layout of some blurbs that had red text on top of a red background (making it harder to see).

I can't recommend this book highly enough to any woman who is expecting, regardless if this is your first baby or last!

Heidi says

I have followed Genevieve on YouTube and I was so excited for the release of her book! I am not pregnant and don't have kids yet but I was really curious to read her book! I appreciate that she touched on diet and tests that you are offered during pregnancy as well as what the risks are and if they are necessary. She gives you to resources and tools you need to make decisions. I am very happy that she touched on MTHFR and EMF exposure which are two issues that most people are unaware of. The only negatives that I found is that she does site any of her information. As with anything I would use this book as a a tool, rather than a step by step guide to follow, then research and draw my own conclusions after speaking to a qualified medical professional (as The Mama Natural is not one). She didn't come off as preaching that her opinion was the only way and stated multiple times that each parent has to make their own decisions about what works for them and their family. I love the illustrations and how she presented the information as well! I will definitely be purchasing this book in the future and for my friends as well!

Amanda Bunton says

I'm a second time mom and I really appreciated the information this book provided. It has helped me view my pregnancy with more perspective and understanding to my options in how I want to have my baby! It's not pushy and gives you different perspectives on every topic. Very educational and worth the read for anyone wanting to learn more about pregnancy outside of just doing what the standard is.

Mackenzie Fawcett says

As someone who did not read 'What to Expect When You're Expecting', I really don't have a frame of reference to many "week-by-week pregnancy" books.

However, as someone who does not identify as "crunchy" BUT KNOWS that there is more out there than just the standard hospital birth, this week-by-week pregnancy book was OUTSTANDING. Additionally, I purchased this book right after it was first released, so I feel like I am part of the first generation of momma's who are using this book, and can say that my husband and I WHOLLY enjoyed it.

(I truly never thought my husband would ask me about my thoughts regarding encapsulation, because I never thought he would care... thanks Mama Natural).

It's a great foundational book for people who are crunchy-curious and just want to know more about what is out there.

Emily Monroe says

This is by far my favorite pregnancy book. The author provides a balanced perspective, with the "natural"/physiological options given first. She brought in midwives, doulas, and plenty of reference evidence throughout the book, and balanced out advice with affirmations, recipes, and anecdotes. This was enjoyable and easy to read. I highly recommend it as a pregnancy guide!

Rachel Smith says

I got this birth for the sake of being prepared for the birth of my first child. I haven't had the birth part yet, so I can't say for certain how much this book helps or is accurate, but it is a lot more helpful than most of the things I've read or been told so far. It's especially helpful for those who want to have as natural a birth as possible.

What I really enjoy about the book is that it's not a judgy book, and simply presents the advantages and disadvantages of many common practices, and nudges you towards thinking about what you want to do. A lot of the things in this book are often done without thinking about it in most pregnancies, so it's pretty helpful to examine what you do and don't want for you and your baby.

There were some things in the book that I thought were a bit crunchy, like essential oils and things, but again, they're not presented as a 'must do'; instead, they're presented as something some mamas swear by while saying that there isn't much scientific evidence for them, so it's your call.

The nutrition tips and exercise advice seem particularly helpful to me, and if I lived near a good birth center, their advice on how to find one would likely be helpful too. It also tells about potential risks and interventions without either playing the 'your baby will die if you don't do what you're told!!' angle or the 'it doesn't matter! the body is magic!' angle. The author talks to you like you're a rational human being who wants what's best for your baby and is able to weight the risks.

While I wouldn't say this is the only book a mother who wants to deliver naturally should read, it's definitely a helpful one, and I intend to hang on to it for future pregnancies as well.

Sarah says

This is the "natural childbirth" angle on pregnancy, which I wanted to read as a counterpoint to the standard medical account.

The good: I didn't notice much in the way of factual inaccuracies, and it works fine as a basic week-by-week guide to fetal development and pregnancy symptoms. The writing style is breezy and entertaining, and includes advice on managing daily life, not just the medical aspects of pregnancy. There's not much in the way of more-natural-than-thou moralizing; Howland makes a point of saying that everyone's needs are different.

The bad: there are some wacky things (like worries about radiation exposure from cell phones). There's a lot

more catastrophizing about how unpleasant parenthood is than I'd like -- yes, it's a challenge, but don't tell me my life will be over!

Overall I wanted to see if there was strong evidence I should be doing natural childbirth rather than the standard medical approach, and I didn't find it here. But there is lots of information about *how* to have a natural childbirth, different kinds of options (home, hospital, or birthing center; nurse midwives and doulas; etc).

Melissa Colby says

I really enjoyed this pregnancy book. It was well written and organized nicely. I appreciate that she pushes for the natural route but also explains how modern medicine and interventions can be life savers. I hate the obsessive natural parenting push that ignores the fact that natural doesn't work 100% of the time and modern medicine does have its place, thus the huge decrease in childbirth deaths... She is natural but also realistic, which is refreshing. It makes her advice and research easier to accept. Definitely worth your time. I'd suggest it as the first pregnancy book you read. I've read numerous and this one takes the cake.

Sarah says

While at storytime at my local bookstore this weekend, I picked up the closest adult book. This one. I opened to a random page and it described how women do genetic testing of the fetus to gain reassurance that their baby will be healthy or to prepare for having a sick child. There was literally not a word of discussion that the majority of pregnant people who learn their child will have a major illness have an abortion -- and that's why they do the test to enact this option if necessary.

If Genevieve Howland wants readers to make informed choices then she needs to inform them. This is intellectually dishonest.

Side note: I brought the book to the manager of the bookstore and pointed this out to her. She was aghast and explained it was a used book they had recently bought. She discounted it to \$1 so I would buy it and not get in the hands of anyone else. She also agreed to not purchase any new or used copies.

Sarah says

Great pregnancy book! Does a good job balancing natural and more medically based birthing ideologies without being too preachy.

Andrea Benver says

I received a copy of Mama Natural's week by week guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth totally free in exchange for my honest review. It has been a long time since I was pregnant, my youngest child is 9 as a

matter of fact--but I am an RN, and I like to stay up to date on the newest factoids and practice about various parts of life from birth to death. I loved the visuals, the voice and the information presented in this book. It contains so many useful tidbits and I will be including it as a part of many baby shower gifts for some time to come!

Ryan LaDage says

A great, informative read that walks you through nearly everything you need to know and prepare for your little one's arrival! The author goes week by week and makes a wide range of suggestions on how to get ready and how to cope with pregnancy (most are very practical).

Also helpful is the newborn chapter at the end to kind of provide a "what now" once the baby is born.

A must read for anyone looking to steer clear of all the highly-medical and AMA pressures that are so rampant. Good for dads to read too. I learned a lot and it helped me know what was happening to my wife's body and emotions; and what I could do to help and support; and helped me understand what was being talked about during all those midwife appointments!

Clarissa says

This book has great tips for pregnancy and I especially loved the hospital birth day packing list, it had things on there I wouldn't have thought of.

Danica says

I've adored Mama Natural's website for years, and I bought this book to add to my resources collection (I'm a Birth Doula). I figured I would skim through it and make sure it was as reliable as I anticipated, but I ended up reading it cover to cover - all 500 pages. It's now my #1 suggestion for anyone who asks about the best pregnancy/childbirth-related educational book. The information is for moms of all birth plans - the perfect modern day resource for just about every question you could think to ask about pregnancy and birth. Whether you read one chapter each week or you use each chapter for reference as needed, you will not regret having this book.
