



He has his  
own milestones  
to reach too!



# new-mom milestones

Not all firsts are for your baby.  
Here's what to expect now that you're  
no longer expecting.

by HOLLY PEVZNER

After nine months of planning and preparation, I was ready (at least in theory) for my baby's upcoming big moments. But no one clued me in about all the firsts that I'd be experiencing as a new parent. "Some milestones are incredibly happy and others will be a reminder that moms aren't perfect and life is just different now," says Heather Gibbs Flett, a mom of three and coauthor of *The Rookie Mom's Handbook*. Now that I'm deep in the trenches of mommyhood, I'll let you in on a little secret: Weather these first curveballs and you'll become one tough mama.

## 1 Feeling mommy envy

I'm not a supercompetitive person. So I was taken aback when my first big surge of jealousy hit when my son, Theo, and I started going to a baby gym class together. We were in a sea of children who adored being there. They high-fived and played with toys while Theo merely clung to my leg and chewed on the rubber balls.

It was a weekly torture session for both of us. He didn't enjoy being guided to the various pieces of equipment; he was tired and in no mood to put on a show for a bunch of strangers—or me. I hated it because my kid was miserable

and I couldn't make him less so. Looking at all the other seemingly perfect babies (and their proud, smiley parents) made me feel depressed. What was I doing wrong?

Now, looking back, I admit I might have been overly critical. "Parents need to remember that there's such a big range of normal. If you're constantly judging your child by what he hasn't accomplished yet, you may not recognize all the wonderful things he's achieved and might miss out on just enjoying being a parent," says Tasha R. Howe, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Humboldt State University, in Arcata, California. Once I realized that my envy was turning something fun into a stress-fest, I switched us to a post-nap afternoon music class, where we both fared much better. Theo still didn't sit calmly and listen like a lot of the other kids. Instead, he boogied and I just chilled out.

## 2 Missing a landmark moment

The first time your baby does anything—smile, roll over, sit up—is a big, adorable deal. "I watched my older daughter, Maya, for what seemed like hours waiting for her to roll over. She was so close! And as soon as I left the room, she did it," recalls Christine Wagner, from Shrewsbury,



Massachusetts. “My husband got to witness it while I was washing the dishes.”

Sure, it’s a bummer when you feel like you’ve missed an important milestone in your baby’s life. “But there’s always the first laugh or crawl or step that you *will* get to witness,” says Amy Tiemann, Ph.D., author of *Mojo Mom: Nurturing Your Self While Raising a Family*. “Don’t allow free-floating regret to overshadow the good stuff.” Fortunately, Magner eased up on herself. “My daughter Savannah was premature. Seeing her develop normally was more important than witnessing each milestone.”

### 3 Making an emergency call to the doctor

I can’t even tell you how many times I said to my husband, “He feels hot. Does he feel hot to you? Get the thermometer!” However, I didn’t want to call the pediatrician unnecessarily and be dismissed as the Crazy New Mom. But then it happened: the pimple. It was a giant, pus-filled, I’m-16-and-have-my-period kind of pimple pulsing on my baby boy’s cheek. Horrified, I wondered, can pimples get infected? What if it’s MRSA?

This time, I had to make the call. My doctor very graciously listened to me

and said, “You can put a warm cloth on it to help open it up, if you’d like. But don’t worry. He’s fine. Babies get pimples.” I hung up feeling slightly ridiculous but also grateful that I had picked a really great pediatrician. From then on, I felt comfortable asking her just about anything. “That first panicked call should leave you feeling respected and listened to. If you feel judged, it’s time to switch doctors,” says Dr. Howe.

### 4 Accidentally hurting your baby

If you flip through pictures from the first few weeks of my son’s life, you’ll notice that he’s wearing those itty-bitty baby mittens in almost all of the shots. I was terrified of trimming his nails, so I hid them. Brilliant, right? However, once I finally bit the bullet and cut them, my nerves, coupled with Theo’s squirms, brought about my worst fear: I snipped his skin and his finger started bleeding. We both cried. I vowed to give my husband nail-cutting duty from then on.

Remembering how I felt in that moment—horrible, guilty, incompetent—my heart went out to my friend, Tracy Kellogg-Brodeur, from Wilmington, North Carolina, when she admitted that her hands had slipped as she tried to remove her 9-month-old, Zoe, from her stroller. Zoe landed on the floor—on her head—with a big thud. She was fine, but my friend was so mortified that she never told anyone

### “Don’t allow free-floating regret to overshadow the good stuff.”

but her husband about the incident for two years.

Even though it can be scary or embarrassing to do so, experts say sharing your parenting fumbles with others is a wise move. “The more we humanize the parenting experience for each other, the less alone we’ll feel,” says Dr. Howe. I’m nowhere near perfect, and I’m not ashamed to admit it—and neither should you. Today, I’m in charge of most nail maintenance in my household. I still slip every once in a while, but everyone always recovers quickly.

### 5 Discovering your new body

I was surprised the first time I put on one of my favorite shirts after finally shedding the 30-plus pounds of baby weight. My old standby had become so short and it pulled in weird spots. I thought, “But the weight is gone! What the heck is this?” Unlike me, Heather Gibbs Flett, from Berkeley, California, was happy about her new-body wake-up call. “After my third child, I was jubilant that I could squeeze into my pre-pregnancy jeans—my fat jeans!” she says. What she understood, and I eventually learned, was to appreciate what my body had gone through and accept the changes.



Resist the urge to compare!



Cuddling counts as intimacy.

For Kerry Colburn, mom of two and author of *Mama's Big Book of Little Lifesavers*, this meant shopping for her new figure. "After I lost the baby weight, I enlisted the help of a personal shopper at a department store," says Colburn—who returned to the personal shopper when she was done breastfeeding to get new bras too. "Fresh clothes that fit well are an ego boost, and the time right after your baby is born is when many of us need that boost the most," says Colburn. "By spending a little bit of money and energy on myself, I was reminded that it can't be all about the baby."

## 6 Having sex again

I'm not sure who was more nervous about having postbirth sex—my husband or me. He was worried about

causing me pain, and I was worried about feeling it. Lots of stress does not make for a very sexy evening. "Even with my medical background, I was nervous," confesses Hilda Hutcherson, M.D., a mother of four and clinical professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. "I had an episiotomy with my first child and even though my doctor told me it had healed, it still felt like something had happened down there."

Her advice and my doctor's was the same: Use plenty of lube and talk your way through the experience. In the end, our encounter, along with all the careful forethought and discussion, was oddly romantic. It wasn't about orgasms, it was about intently taking the path back to him-and-me.

## 7 Going on a girls' night out

I planned my first night off from baby duty (a rock concert with a good friend) before I had even pushed my child out. Something about having "concert with Angela" on the calendar helped me get through a lot of those rough early days with a newborn. Theo was 2 months old when concert day finally rolled around, but I was exhausted and nervous. I left the pediatrician's number along with three unopened containers of baby formula for my husband. (What if my son drank all four bottles of the

pumped breast milk I had waiting in the fridge?)

But what I remember most about that night was not drinking a beer (or two), dancing in the aisle, or laughing with my friend. It was the quiet ride home. After spending the last two months holed up with an infant, I felt lonely, bored, and disconnected from the outside world. But with just one night out, I felt rejuvenated. In fact, I was ready to put something else on the calendar.

My milestone moment? Realizing I could still be a good friend, a fun person, a little rowdy, and a little silly, even as a mom. 😊

## way to grow, mom!

You'll reach more mommy milestones as your baby ages. Get a sneak peek at what's ahead by visiting [parents.com/mom-milestones](http://parents.com/mom-milestones).