

JUNE 2016



GGMG | GOLDEN GATE  
MOTHERS GROUP®

magazine

# *Under the Hood*



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# Letter from the Editor: Running Well-Oiled Machines

By Kirsten Pfleger



Kirsten and her husband Karl are grateful that their daughters' preschool has a woodworking shop so that they can hammer and saw somewhere not under their supervision.

My first car was a 1982 Ford Fairmont, and it was a jalopy. When my parents upgraded, they turned it over to my sister and me. Although the Fairmont—with its boxy body, flat blue color, and “Vancouver, WA Sausage Fest” bumper sticker—generally got us from point A to point B, it didn’t win any awards for style. It also had a penchant for not starting and for running out of gas, but maybe that had more to do with me seeing how far \$5 could take me than any real failing on its part. If I had half the mechanical skills of this month’s cover models, I probably could have had it running smoothly.

In this issue, we are rolling up our sleeves and getting down and dirty to explore what makes this whole machine of parenthood and family hum along.

Keeping our bodies in running order is first on the list for meeting life’s challenges head-on. Maggie Biroscak, on page 24, takes a closer look at the benefits of breakfast and gives some practical tips and delicious recipes to fill your tanks at the start of the day. For those of us filling the tiniest of bellies, on page 14 Catherine Symon details the mechanics of letdown.

No machine can run for a lifetime without maintenance, and our bodies aren’t any different. Pregnancy and childbirth place heavy burdens on our bodies, especially our pelvic floor. On page 20, Catherine Symon explains how the pelvic floor works, what effects pregnancy has on it, and steps to take if everything doesn’t return to baseline after the usual timeline. Sleepless nights coupled with hormonal changes can affect our skin as well; Sonya Abrams shares how she brought a new glow to her face on page 39.

No matter how well you perform routine maintenance, the unexpected can happen and you may find yourself in the ER. On page 28, Shaheen Bilgrami has assembled a list of items to keep accessible to make any hours spent in triage less trying.

The engines that we probably work the hardest to keep engaged and in good form are our children’s minds. On page 16, Tara Hardesty looks at how to encourage our children to build and tinker while living in an urban environment. This concept is further explored on page 10 by John Hardesty, and our expert explains how to keep children excited about science on page 8.

*The engines that we probably work the hardest to keep engaged and in good form are our children’s minds.*

That Ford of my adolescence pattered through my family for many years. My younger sister drove it in high school, and then my older sister was reunited with it when she and her husband bought it from my parents for \$1. It moved with them to Louisiana where they drove it up until its last breath. May the bodies and machines you use daily be blessed with an equally long life!

*K Pfleger*

## Housekeeping

Opinions expressed in this issue are those of the contributors. Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by GGMG of any products or services. The editors reserve the right to accept, edit, or reject any content submitted to the magazine.

**ADVERTISING:** Advertisements are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. For submission information, email [advertising@ggmg.org](mailto:advertising@ggmg.org).

**THIS ISSUE MADE POSSIBLE BY:** Beyonce, family visits, handmade Mother’s Day gifts and cards that made me cry, tiki drinks, “Why can’t I sleep at preschool?”, *Game of Thrones* and Jon Snow fantasies, grief gardening, froyo and swedish fish, *Heroes* season 2 and spring foraging, husband job woes, somehow, yet again, adult onset acne.

**COMING NEXT:** July/August—Feminism; September—Get Moving  
**CONTEST:** Congratulations to Stephanie Mackler, who won beauty on her terms from Beauty Brigade.

Have an idea for an issue theme or article? Please email [editor@ggmg.org](mailto:editor@ggmg.org).

# Letter from the Board: Celebrate GGMG While Giving Back

By Cathy Tran

Although it is technically considered more of a middle than an end, the months of May and June always feel more like the close of the year. School usually lets out and you move on to the next grade feeling older and (hopefully) wiser. Now that I have kids, the end of the school year has taken on a whole new meaning. My summertime is filled with camps, warm-weather adventures, and the bittersweet realization that my baby has moved one year closer to college and independence.

I really try to relish the opportunity to have more time with my kids and take them on fun adventures in our beautiful city and surrounding areas. But like any mom, working or not, it is still important to take time for ourselves, let our hair down a little, and have some fun. Which is why I am excited to announce details about our special GGMG 20th anniversary party, with all proceeds to benefit the Homeless Prenatal Program ([www.homelessprenatal.org](http://www.homelessprenatal.org)).

*But like any mom, working or not, it is still important to take time for ourselves, let our hair down a little, and have some fun.*

A longtime GGMG community partner, HPP has a mission to break the cycle of childhood poverty. Over the past 25 years, it has provided valuable resources to mothers and families in need of

help, giving them everything from diapers, wipes, and other basic necessities to housing, parenting support, and job coaching. GGMG is excited to throw this party not only to celebrate the two decades since our founding, but also to benefit this amazing organization.

This super-fun event is open to both GGMG members and non-members. We will have a raffle with some amazing prizes, a DJ to get your groove on, and yummy food and drinks to enjoy.

Homeless Prenatal Program is generously donating its space for the event and all proceeds will benefit its many programs for homeless and low-income families.

So please mark your calendar for July 15 from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Homeless Prenatal Program (2500 18th St.). One hundred percent of the ticket costs will benefit HPP. Tickets are \$50 (\$60 after July 1) and can be purchased at [www.ggmgbenefit.eventbrite.com](http://www.ggmgbenefit.eventbrite.com).

We can’t wait to celebrate with you!



Cathy Tran has been a volunteer with GGMG since 2012 and currently serves as Vice Chair on the Board of Directors. She is a stay at home mom to two rambunctious boys, Charlie and JJ, and wife to an amazing and supportive husband, Peter. She lives in the Parkside and enjoys fun nights out with the girls, chips and queso, and Bravo TV.

*Cathy Tran*

## Volunteer of the Month



Congratulations to **Sherri Howe**, our volunteer of the month! Sherri is the advertising manager with *GGMG Magazine* and has been volunteering since May 2013. Sherri and husband A.T. are parents to Andre (age 6).

**WE WANT TO KNOW...Something about you that might surprise people if they knew it:** Pre-kid, I used to be quite athletic. I competed in marathons, triathlons, and even swam from Alcatraz to SF; **First choice for new career or venture:** I wouldn’t change my career! I finally found my calling in real estate, after being a techie for 13 years and working in finance for three years. I’m going to be an 80-year-old realtor in a red pantsuit, still going strong; **What you miss most about your hometown:** My mom’s Jell-O mold—orange Jell-O with shredded cheese and crushed pineapple. People in central Pennsylvania do not find this odd, although I suspect readers might; **City slicker or outdoor enthusiast:** Oh, definitely city slicker. My husband and I found out at Camp Mather (the hard way) that we just aren’t campers; **Place in the world you would most like to visit:** There is just no way that I can narrow this down. A mere 34 countries have been checked off my list, and we have over 200 to go. I hope my son likes to travel!

Sherri will enjoy a 60-minute massage at International Orange Spa (2044 Fillmore St.). Book yourself a massage today at [www.internationalorange.com](http://www.internationalorange.com).

Factory Fun

Got a kid who loves knowing how stuff is made? These tours are a lot more enjoyable than searching for answers on Google.

By Stephanie AuWerter

Boudin Museum & Bakery Tour

Carb lovers rejoice! Watch bakers create adorable sourdough turtles and crabs, check out old-timey mining and baking tools, and sample some tasty wares.

**DATE:** Daily  
**TIME:** 11:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 160 Jefferson St.  
**COST:** \$3 per person for self-guided tour  
[www.boudinbakery.com/Museum/Bakery\\_Tour](http://www.boudinbakery.com/Museum/Bakery_Tour)

Cable Car Museum

A behind-the-scenes look at San Francisco’s famed cable cars. View the huge engines, winding wheels, and cable line in action.

**DATE:** Daily  
**TIME:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 1201 Mason St.  
**COST:** Free  
[www.cablecarmuseum.org](http://www.cablecarmuseum.org)

Dandelion Chocolate's Book Signing

Kids (ages 4 to 8) will learn the sweet art of chocolate-making via a book reading by the author of *Sweet Coco* and get a peek at the factory. Reservations required; children must attend with an adult. (Alternative classes for kids also available; see website for details.)

**DATE:** Saturday, June 18  
**TIME:** 10:30 a.m.  
**PLACE:** 740 Valencia St.  
**COST:** Free  
[www.dandelionchocolate.com/events](http://www.dandelionchocolate.com/events)

Fentons Creamery Arctic Tour

Brrrr! Bundle up and visit the ice cream production room as well as the Blast Freezer, with samples provided. Ages 6 and up. Reservations required. Note that tours require an 8-person minimum.

**DATE:** Daily  
**TIME:** 11 a.m.  
**PLACE:** 4226 Piedmont Ave., Oakland (additional location in Vacaville)  
**COST:** \$4.95 per person for basic tour; add-ons, including lunch, available for additional fee  
[www.fentonscreamery.com/arctic\\_tour.php](http://www.fentonscreamery.com/arctic_tour.php)



Golden Gate Fortune Cookie Factory

Our prediction? Your little one will love this charming and tiny factory. Watch machines churn out cookies, see how the fortunes are placed inside, and taste a fresh-baked sample.

**DATE:** Daily  
**TIME:** 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 56 Ross Alley  
**COST:** Free

Intel Museum

Got a budding tech star on your hands? Dig in and discover how silicon chips are made and how they’ve changed modern lives. Best suited for those in 2nd through 12th grades.

**DATE:** Monday through Saturday  
**TIME:** 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Monday through Friday), 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Saturday)  
**PLACE:** 2200 Mission College Blvd., Santa Clara  
**COST:** Free  
[www.tinyurl.com/visitintelmuseum](http://www.tinyurl.com/visitintelmuseum)

Jelly Belly Factory Tour

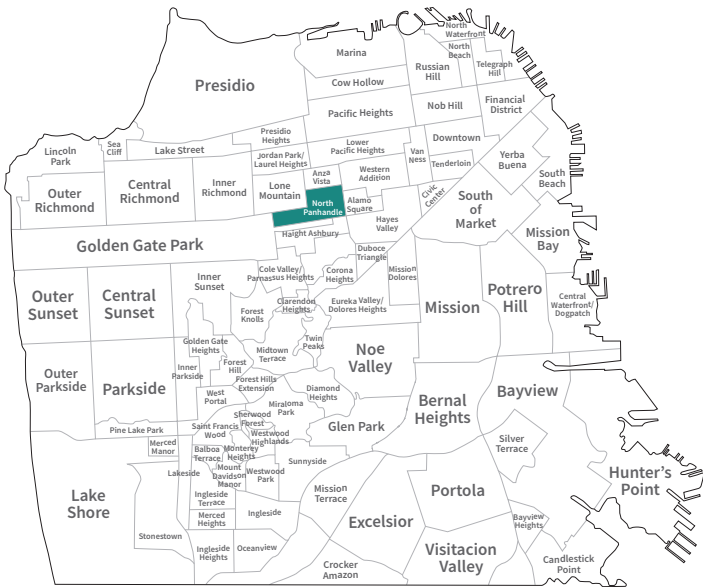
Just how does Jelly Belly make its 150 types of sweets? It’s a question most children are profoundly interested in answering—while munching on samples, of course.

**DATE:** Daily (Note: to see the factory in operation, visit Monday through Friday)  
**TIME:** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 1 Jelly Belly Ln., Fairfield  
**COST:** Free  
[www.jellybelly.com/california-factory](http://www.jellybelly.com/california-factory)

Mrs. Grossman’s Stickers Factory Tour

Watch thousands of stickers being printed and cut. Includes free stickers and a sticker art project. Reservations required.

**DATE:** Monday through Thursday  
**TIME:** 10 & 11 a.m., 1 & 2 p.m.  
**PLACE:** 3810 Cypress Dr., Petaluma  
**COST:** Free for under age 3; \$5 for ages 3 to 11; \$7 for 12 and up  
[www.mrsgrossmans.com/pages/tour-the-factory](http://www.mrsgrossmans.com/pages/tour-the-factory)



Li'l Kid, Big City: NoPa

By Bobby Shukla

Home of the Divisadero corridor—where hipsters and children casually collide—NoPa is a neighborhood in transition with much to offer. (Unless otherwise specified, all businesses are located on Divisadero.) Start with breakfast at popular **Eddie’s Café**, which offers Southern fare in a family atmosphere. For gourmet-style soul food, brunch at **Brenda’s Meat & Three**, which even has a fried veggie po’ boy for vegetarians.

On Sundays, walk down to the **Divisadero Farmer’s Market** (1300 Grove St.). Spanning only a block, it’s the perfect size for children to sample organic fruit. For off-the-beaten-path shopping, check out the uniquely crafted items at **Rare Device**, including toys, books, and clothes for kids, or grab a cool board game at **Gamescape**, which offers a wide variety of games for all ages.

Ride your skateboards to **San Francisco Skate Club**, a skate shop that runs fun programs devoted to youth of diverse backgrounds. For outdoor fun, you’re not experiencing NoPa without a walk along the **Panhandle’s** footpath (bordered by Fell, Baker, Stanyan, and Oak streets), whose playground is up for a major renovation soon.

Afterwards, grab handmade Tangerine Dream ice cream at **Bi-Rite** and freshly-baked Dark Mountain Rye bread at **The Mill**. Join other families for dinner at super-kid-friendly **Green Chile Kitchen** (1801 McAllister St.), **Little Star Pizza**, or **Kung Food** (1650 McAllister St.). ♦

*Bobby Shukla is a lawyer who represents employees in a variety of employment law areas, including discrimination, harassment, disability accommodation, retaliation, whistle-blowing, and severance negotiations.*

Make a Splash This Summer

By Megan Bushnell

A field trip to one of these outdoor swimming pools will definitely turn you into the “coolest” mom in town. Swim times vary by day and season, so we suggest calling ahead to confirm them. All pools are approximately an hour’s drive from San Francisco. Splash away!

San Ramon Aquatic Center

A fantastic water park for the whole family, this aquatic center includes a toddler area, diving boards, and water slides for older kids. A few tips: purchase tickets online to avoid waiting in line, bring your own shade, and note that the water is unheated, so it’s best on sunny days.

**ADDRESS:** 9900 Broadmoor Dr., San Ramon  
**PHONE:** 925.973.3240  
**COST:** \$5  
[www.tinyurl.com/ggmgsanramon](http://www.tinyurl.com/ggmgsanramon)

El Cerrito Swim Center

The complex houses three areas for play: a lap pool, a fountain area, and the Splash Park for little kids. Open mornings and afternoons, so have a midday plan!

**ADDRESS:** 7007 Moeser Ln., El Cerrito  
**PHONE:** 510.559.7011  
**COST:** \$3 to \$6  
[www.tinyurl.com/ggmgelcerrito](http://www.tinyurl.com/ggmgelcerrito)

McNear’s Beach Pool

Located within Marin County’s McNear’s Beach Park, the pool requires a vehicle parking fee. You’ll get access to a fun beach, acres of potential picnic spots, a popular fishing pier, and, of course, the main and adjacent toddler pool.

**ADDRESS:** 201 Cantera Way, San Rafael  
**PHONE:** 415.446.4424  
**COST:** \$5 (pool admission only)  
[www.tinyurl.com/ggmgmcnears](http://www.tinyurl.com/ggmgmcnears)

Robert Livermore Community Center Pool

A slightly longer drive than the others on this list, the Livermore pool has a fantastic water play structure with waterfalls, water cannons, and a crazy water slide. Plus, there is ample shade, lounge chairs, and a grassy area bordering the pool. Worth the drive!

**ADDRESS:** 4444 East Ave., Livermore  
**PHONE:** 925.373.5700  
**COST:** \$3  
[www.larpd.org/aquatics/rc.html](http://www.larpd.org/aquatics/rc.html)

*Megan Bushnell is a former marine biologist who takes her two little fish to the pool sometimes, but she prefers the ocean.*

Stephanie is a San Francisco freelancer who has written for The Wall Street Journal, Real Simple, Parents, Money Magazine, and many other publications. She is a married mother of one feisty toddler, stepmom of two, and owner of two very tolerant fur-babies.



# Ask the Expert

## Getting Kids Excited About Science

With Dan Sudran

The idea behind Mission Science Workshop (MSW) and Excelsior Science Workshop (ESW) was born in Dan's garage, when neighborhood kids would come by to explore his personal collection of rocks, bones, fossils, and more. Now MSW and ESW partner with SFUSD to bring science experiences to schools in San Francisco.



**GGMG: What do you bring to the schools, and how do these activities engage students differently from the typical science classroom?**

**DS:** We emphasize science as an experience. Students

of neighboring schools usually come to us. This gets them out of their daily classroom routine and allows the students to work with a much wider range of equipment and materials.

We host classroom enrichment field trips for kindergarten through grade 12, after-school workshops, and summer camps. When kids come to MSW or ESW, they see our large garage-like spaces that are crammed with animal bones, live reptiles, tools, rocks, and fossils, all ready to be touched and explored. We have also built a number of Exploratorium-type exhibits which illustrate, in a fun and engaging way, how sound, electricity and magnetism, air and water pressure, and light and color work. Students get a lot of leeway in choosing what they want to study and what materials they use. And while our instructors offer structure and guidance, we also encourage lots of free exploration to tap into children's natural curiosity.

In some cases, we do bring unique experiences into schools. An excavated skeleton of a 30-foot baby gray whale that had washed up on Pescadero Beach is now part of a traveling exhibit. This spring we will bring the bones to several elementary schools, where the kids will get to assemble the entire whale skeleton. That hands-on experience is vital when it comes to learning, and loving, science.

**GGMG: Middle school seems to be the time when many kids start to lose interest in subjects like science. Why do you think that happens? Are they actually less interested in science, or are there other factors at work?**

**DS:** Middle school students have a whole host of social concerns to deal with, and the social aspect of school is often pretty distracting for them. Unfortunately, some kids do lose focus and science becomes just another class to deal with rather than a source of inspiration. I was the same way! But I don't think it's necessarily because their natural curiosity has vanished; there's

just a lot more material competing for their attention. Give a teen access to interesting objects, let him explore and discover on his own, and you're likely to see at least a hint of the excitement that's so obvious in young children. Taking tweens and teens out of a school environment and away from the social pecking order also helps them let their guard down. Of course, science isn't for everyone. But some of the kids who appear to lose interest during those middle and high school years eventually become passionate about the world and how it works, as I did.

Kids are also much more engaged and interested when they see the connections between what they are learning and what they see in the real world. It's hard to illustrate that with a lecture and a textbook. But let a student hold a live python and she might get a much greater appreciation for how muscles work, how digestion happens, and how animals use their senses to survive.

Have her turn on an electrostatic generator and she might wonder how electricity flows in a house and how lightning is generated. Give her the

materials to grow and nurture a seedling and she might become curious about farming and water conservation and local ecosystems. Experiencing science is what brings it to life.

**GGMG: Can you share a few ideas that parents can use to make science accessible, fun, and engaging at home for young children and older students?**

**DS:** Get your kids outside. Spending time in nature is probably the easiest and most important way to expose children to science. Encourage them to collect things and notice trees, rocks, sand, and the amazing variety of materials and animals and plants our planet has to offer. Let them learn by using all of their senses. Expect that your kids (and your car and maybe your house) will get a little dirty. That's OK; science can be messy.

For older children, set aside a tinkering area somewhere in your house, apartment, or garage where it is all right to make a bit of a mess. Provide some basic tools and raw materials and let them explore. And if you happen to have a passion for science, share your enthusiasm but avoid the temptation to instruct. In science, the most important thing is to ask questions. ♦

*Dan Sudran is the founder and executive director of the Mission Science Workshop and Excelsior Science Workshop in San Francisco. He started the workshops 25 years ago during his tenure as chief engineering technician in the City College Engineering Department.*

*Experiencing science is what brings it to life.*

# GGMG: Helping Others, Treating Yourself

## Community Support

### Diaper Drive

GGMG is partnering with the [Homeless Prenatal Program \(HPP\)](#) to host our annual diaper drive through the end of June.

HPP works to break the cycle of childhood poverty by finding housing for homeless families, providing prenatal and parenting support, and helping clients address issues related to mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse. In addition to providing basic emergency needs and child care, HPP offers clients a community technology center and tools to build financial stability, including a training program to become community health workers.

Please join us in supporting HPP in any of these ways:

**Donate funds directly to HPP at:** [www.homelessprenatal.org/donate](http://www.homelessprenatal.org/donate)

Please be sure to choose "GGMG Gives" in the gift designation scroll-down to help us track donations.

**Donate diapers directly to HPP via Amazon at:** [tinyurl.com/HPP-diaper-drive](http://tinyurl.com/HPP-diaper-drive)

**Drop off diapers at the following locations:**

Peekadoodle, 900 North Point St., Suite F100

Peek-a-Boo Factory, 2 West Portal Ave.

Play Haven, 254 Laguna Honda Blvd.

Recess, 470 Carolina St.

**Thank you so much for your support of this drive!** For more information, please email [drives@ggmg.org](mailto:drives@ggmg.org).

## Contest



### Package of Three Signature Facials

Whether you have signs of aging skin, hyper-pigmentation, or acne, Jennifer Clark's expertise can transform your skin. Jennifer is celebrating her 20th year in business, yet she continues to take new classes yearly to stay current with the ever-changing skincare industry. Jennifer will customize your facial treatment and provide samples perfect for your skin type from her own product line, worth \$50.

Jennifer Clark Skincare is located in the historic James Flood building in Union Square. The private and relaxing little oasis is right next to Powell Street Station for easy transportation access. All GGMG members will receive 20 percent off when they mention GGMG.

One lucky GGMG member will win a package of three signature facials (a \$360 value).

TO ENTER THE CONTEST, SEND AN EMAIL WITH "JENNIFER CLARK SKINCARE" IN THE SUBJECT LINE TO [CONTEST@GGMG.ORG](mailto:CONTEST@GGMG.ORG) BY JUNE 30, 2016.

For more information, please visit [www.jenniferclarkskincare.com](http://www.jenniferclarkskincare.com) or call 415.706.1380.



# DADLANDS

## Chase the Thread

By John Hardesty

Necessity is the mother of invention. We’ve all heard the adage, but perhaps never actually applied it. My dad grew up on a farm in Northern Indiana in the '30s (yes, the 1930s) and there was a lot of necessity to go around. They grew and/or traded for all of their food—everyone was a locavore. When something broke, they fixed it themselves, and frequently designed and fabricated tools to complete a job. Coming up with clever ways to finish work more efficiently was key to keeping the farm afloat; materials were mostly salvaged from abandoned machinery and repurposed to solve a current problem.

We did not need to grow our own food when I was a child, but I was lucky enough to learn my dad’s survival skills. He was self-employed and did a myriad of things to make a living, often converting real estate from one use to another. He might buy an old farm with the plan of building some roads and making home sites to be sold to a developer. However, we would first salvage everything on the property—buildings and equipment, certainly—but sometimes even quarrying a gravel pit or moving live trees to new sites.

My journey in learning to build things began with unbuilding them. In our early teens, my dad would put us in the loader bucket, armed with a belt full of tools, and lift us up to the roof of an old barn. Starting with the metal roof, we would begin carefully disassembling it in the reverse order it had gone together. We could see exactly how they had built it, and in our

*I find that creating something physical or completing simple tasks...can give a sense of freedom and visual accomplishment like no other.*

minds, contemplate how it could be done better, or stronger, or faster. Once apart, we cleaned up the boards and beams, removed nails, and straightened and sorted them into buckets by size to be used to build something else later. The siding and beams were carefully hauled back to the shop, stacked neatly by type, and covered with the very same metal roofing that had protected it for over 100 years as a barn. I suppose my dad was ahead of his time as a recycler of building materials.

I learned to weld before I was 10, but I distinctly remember the thrill of touching a metal rod and melding two pieces of steel into one. The power I held in my hand was liberating. One time, we



salvaged an old dairy facility, cutting out hundreds of loops of cooling system pipes, then years later welded those same pipes together into firewood racks. I only realized later that while my dad was thrilled to have our free labor, to us, it seemed like a great reward to do something so cool as to wield torches to create giant steel objects of necessity and long-lived purpose. Those racks are still in use more than 40 years later.

Before my first son was born, I contemplated how to pass these skills along. I realized that it’s not just a matter of how to hold a saw, pound a nail straight, or drill a pilot hole, but rather that these tasks can be rewarding and cathartic. In a world where so much is “virtual,” I find that creating something physical or completing simple tasks, like installing a new P-trap under a sink, can give a sense of freedom and visual accomplishment like no other.

Then along came my son, Luke, and I began to realize that while perhaps some of the specifics of mechanics and building are taught, the propensity to do them may indeed be hereditary. Since the time he could grip an object, Luke would fixate on it, clearly wanting to know how it worked. He began taking things apart, anything and everything. Then, much to our surprise, he put them back together, over and over again, until he was satisfied he had completely figured out the process.

It’s almost like my dad is guiding him in some way. Luke loves gardening, fascinated that he can eat things that he planted months before, just like my dad was. Every time I use a tool, he wants to mimic what I’m doing. He shows such a natural curiosity, it would be borderline negligent of me not to pass on everything I can.

I built a workbench in the garage, with a Luke-sized workspace underneath mine where he works away with his Melissa and Doug tools and washable markers. Play aside, he really understands so much more than I thought he would at 2.5 years old.

I can’t wait for the first time he pulls the trigger on my MIG welder and joins two pieces of steel into one. I think the smile behind his little welding helmet will be as big as mine when I first saw those sparks fly. Love you dad—so sorry you never got to meet my boy in person. ❖

*John Hardesty is the General Manager of Hundred Acre Wine Group, where he spends most of his time solving problems. He and wife Tara are parents to Luke, have a second son on the way, and live in West Portal. They are the founders of the Bring Back the Garage movement...it's not just for storage anymore.*

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# Books for Kids Under the Hood

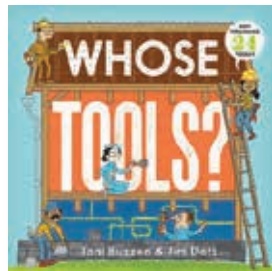
By Laure Latham

Are you a tinkerer, a dreamer, or a builder? For this month's theme, we take a look at books that focus on mechanics in the wider sense. How does it work and what does it do? How can I do it differently and better? It's always fun to get a behind-the-scenes look at the "how" and "why" of stuff in our lives.

## Whose Tools?

Written by Toni Buzzeo, illustrated by Jim Datz

Even if you're not starting a project of your own, you probably know someone who has a serious toolbox and isn't afraid to use it. From wood saws to chisels to paintbrushes, there won't be a basic tool that your little one won't recognize after reading this book. Best of all, you can now go on field trips to Home Depot for a rousing game of "I spy." *Ages: 0 to 2 years*



## More-igami

Written by Dori Kleber

When young Joey discovers origami, he's over the moon. Except Joey is over-enthusiastic and folds so many objects that his family becomes fed up with his obsession. How is he to become a master at his craft if he can't practice? The only way for your children to find out is to grab a piece of paper and read along. *Ages: 4 to 8 years*

## The Bell in the Bridge

Written by Ted Kooser, illustrated by Barry Root

During a summer visit at his grandparents' house, Charlie goes outside one day and discovers a big metal bridge. Have you ever made sound with metal? It's fun. Charlie strikes the bridge with a stone and creates a church-bell sound that echoes into the valley. Is there more than one bridge? As your young explorers will find out, not every mystery has an answer, but searching is always worth the effort. *Ages: 6 to 9 years*



## Anything but Ordinary Addie: The True Story of Adelaide Herrmann, Queen of Magic

Written by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Iacopo Bruno

Magicians need to be great performers as well as risk-takers. This didn't scare young Addie, who became one of the country's greatest magicians at the turn of the 20th century. Kids will learn about a strong, amazing woman who mastered the ultimate magic trick of the Victorian era: the incredibly dangerous bullet-catching trick. This book will be a hit with young audiences who will learn the technique behind her most famous illusion. *Ages: 6 to 9 years*



## Whoosh!: Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking Stream of Inventions

Written by Chris Barton, illustrated by Don Tate



This book tells the true story of an African-American boy who grew up to invent one of the most popular toys ever—the Super Soaker! Lonnie Johnson loved to take things apart and invented objects all his life. By experimenting again and again, he became a renowned scientist, inventor, and NASA engineer, but to this day, the Super Soaker is still the star. Discover the extraordinary life of a boy who never stopped tinkering. *Ages: 7 to 10 years*

Laure is the author of the mommy blog Frog Mom (www.frogmom.com), as well as the book Best Hikes with Kids: San Francisco Bay Area. She writes for several parenting websites and lives in London, where she peppers adventures with her husband and two daughters with compulsory cream tea stops.



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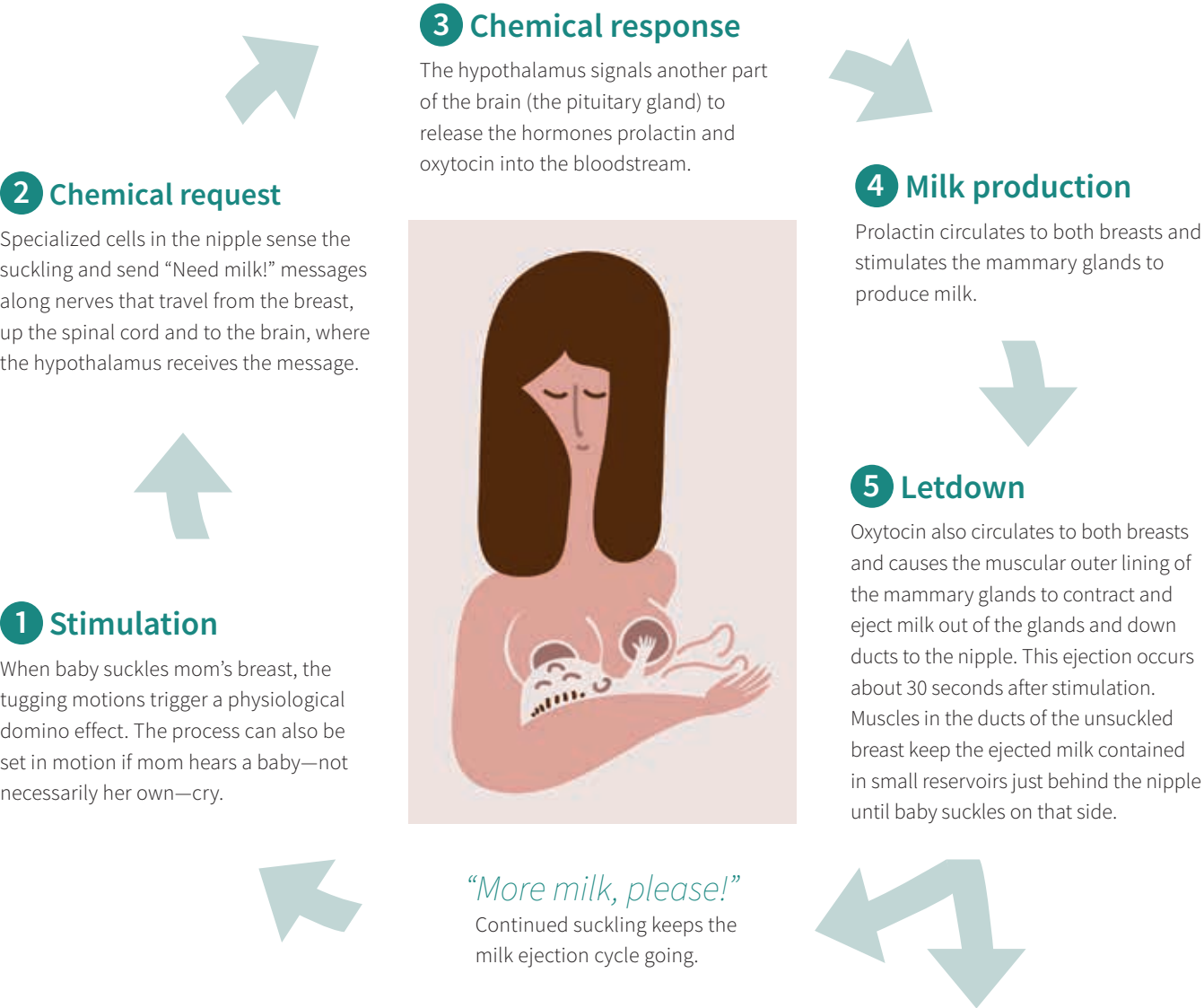


# From Womb to World

## How Letdown Works

By Catherine Symon

The milk ejection reflex, often called “letdown,” makes breast milk accessible to a suckling baby by propelling the milk from the back of the breast (where it is produced) towards the nipple.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Mammary glands are modified sweat glands. Both males and females have mammary glands, but they are usually only functional in females.

Sources: Stanford University, National Institutes of Health, Association of American Medical Colleges, Khan Academy, *Counseling the Nursing Mother: A Lactation Consultant’s Guide* by Judith Lauwers and Debbie Shinskie

Catherine Symon is a medical writer. She hopes her daughter will want to blab about biology at the dinner table because her husband is just not that into it.

## New Arrivals



Congratulations to Marjorie G.! She will be pampering her little one with products from **Babyganics**. These plant-based, tear-free, hypoallergenic cleansers and lotions clean and protect skin from head to toe.

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## Young Mechanics: A World of Discovery

*Children are born curious. Parents can help foster that sense of wonder and discovery, with or without the mess at home.*

By Tara Hardesty

Photographs by Carolyn Soling Photography

While on a family trip, I overheard an interesting conversation between my father and my husband, who were playing with my toddler and talking about raising children. The topic under discussion was the differences between parenting in my dad's day (he is 75) and the way people parent today. While the conversation could have taken several turns, the real focus came down to working and building with our hands. My dad, raised on a farm in Missouri, said that his father used to take him every weekend wherever he went and he would help. Whether it was repairing a tractor, fixing a fence, or working in the fields, my dad was expected to participate and assist. He realizes now that his dad was doing more than gaining an extra pair of hands and keeping his son out of trouble: he was passing along skills that my father uses to this day.

My husband had a similar experience growing up. He, his sister, and his brother



came across. These tasks weren't popular with my husband and his siblings at the time, but looking back on it, he realizes that these

*Making and tinkering are ways for children to explore and learn in their own way and at their own pace.*

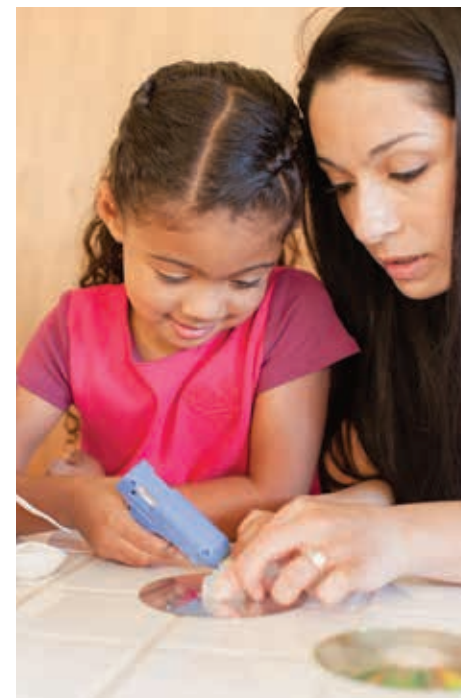
were all involved in his father's projects in upstate New York. His father, a kind of tinkering genius, would teach them to manually build or repair almost anything they

skills have served him well.

We live in a world crowded with choices and decisions regarding how we spend time with and direct our children. We have an abundance of opportunities to choose from, be it physical activities, art classes, or special play spaces. San Francisco city culture emphasizes creating and ingenuity, and offers a multitude of ways to help our children play and learn with their hands.

Play, especially open-ended and discovery-based, is one of the best ways for a child to learn. Over the past several years, there has been an increased emphasis on play that involves allowing a child to manually create, build, and design, often called tinkering. Putting things together and taking things apart helps children develop fine motor skills, enhances critical thinking and problem solving skills, and can help develop peer relationships as they work on a shared project.

My husband and I call my 2.5-year-old son The Little Mechanic. From a very young age, he has shown a real interest in all things



mechanical. When we first sat him down in a high chair to eat real food at 6 months, he ignored the meal and spent 20 minutes on the high chair buckles—no small feat for a normally hungry child. We often leave him alone with toys and come back to find them taken apart. At a recent dinner party, he disassembled a pepper grinder and then put it back together again.

While we are aware that our son will have many interests as he grows, my husband and I will encourage and foster his love of all things mechanical and his innate desire to tinker. We believe that there is a real value to learning how to make and create, whether with building blocks, through stories, or by manipulation of mechanical objects.

### Making and tinkering at home

Whether or not you are interested in building and creating, science or math, everyone has opportunities for making and tinkering at home. The most essential starting point is to create a supportive environment for your kids, one that takes the "less is more" approach on the parent's part.

Ideas for setting up a tinkering area include:

- **Create a toolbox:** This could include anything from sticks and tools like scissors and a small hammer to a beginner glue gun, tape and fasteners, or



paints, brushes, and paper of different sizes.

- **Designating a space in your house for tinkering:** Find a space where your child can feel free to make a mess and get creative. Note that this space should also allow for long periods of uninterrupted play, in case your little one gets on a roll.
- **Get creative with resources and materials:** Check out Google, local schools, and class websites (see list below) for ideas. There are many books and blogs on the subject of tinkering.

If tinkering at home isn't for you or you just don't have the space, San Francisco is teeming with spaces to inspire and provide materials to make and create.

### Classes and camps in San Francisco

**RENEGADE GIRLS TINKERING CLUB**  
[www.renegadegirlstinkeringclub.com](http://www.renegadegirlstinkeringclub.com)

Two GGMG moms, Vicky Keston and Terri David, founded the Renegade Girls Tinkering Club in March 2015. Inspired by their individual loves of science, math, and making things, Vicky and Terri decided to create a space to learn about these subjects that is accessible to girls. "Many of the tinkering programs out there now are designed for boys with girls plugged in [as an afterthought]. As a result, we are losing girls as early as kindergarten because they feel out of place or are afraid they will be laughed at," Vicky says. The club creates a dynamic space designed with girl energy in mind. "Girls want a story, they want to build a structure then move on to decorate and play with the space."

The club's values focus on support and community, listening and collaboration, grit and resilience, a growth mindset, and finding and learning from role models. The Tinkering Club offers nine elementary school aftercare programs this spring, as well as summer camps for kids ages 6 to 10.

**THE EXPLORATORIUM**  
[www.exploratorium.edu](http://www.exploratorium.edu)

The Exploratorium, a museum of science, art, and human perception, is a wonderland for the mind. A trip to the Exploratorium will ignite the curiosity and pique the interest of both children and adults alike. The Tinkering



Studio is a special space within the Exploratorium that is geared towards research and development. It's where "experiments with science, art, technology and delightful ideas" happen. Much of the curriculum skews towards older children, due to the use of sharp or hot tools, and many programs require independent work with longer periods of focus. However, there are several activities that work for younger children as well (and even toddlers with parental assistance); these include the circuit board,



light play, and the marble machines. The Tinkering Studio website ([tinkering.exploratorium.edu/projects](http://tinkering.exploratorium.edu/projects)) also lists projects that are good for the younger child, such as squishy circuits, scribbling machines, and wind tubes.

Another way to experience the fun of the Exploratorium is to check out *The Art of Tinkering*, by Karen Wilkinson and Mike Petrich. The book is accessible to all ages and shares the stories and ideas of over 150 makers creating through art, science, and technology.

**THE BUTTERFLY JOINT**  
[www.thebutterflyjoint.com](http://www.thebutterflyjoint.com)

The Butterfly Joint is a woodworking studio for kids of all ages (there are classes for adult kids too). Classes and camps focus on teaching children traditional joinery techniques, including the use of dovetails, box joints, and loose tenons in place of screws and nails. The goal is for students to walk away with an heirloom piece they built themselves.

The studio offers classes for children from 18 months through 5th grade. There are several options to consider, including classes for building blocks, making walnut dice, or creating bud vases.

The Butterfly Joint also offers camps for children ages 4 and up. Camps range from day-long to week-long programs. All camps and classes take place at the Butterfly Joint.



**THE TINKERING SCHOOL**  
[www.tinkeringschool.com](http://www.tinkeringschool.com)

The Tinkering School, designed for kids from 6 years through high school, adheres to three main philosophies: kids are more capable than they know, the freedom to fail is essential, and anything/everything can be done bigger and bolder.

The Tinkering School offers a variety of day camps, after school programs, and workshops, including an all-girls workshop and welding workshop, to name a few. The San Francisco classes are held at Brightworks.

**CAMP DOODLES**  
[www.campdoodles.com/primo-programs](http://www.campdoodles.com/primo-programs)  
Inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, the Doodle Primo program sees children as "active protagonists of their own learning." Using a weekly inquiry theme like "Disruptive Design" and "Playscapes," the program fosters experimentation, a sense of wonder, and the excitement of discovery.

There are two camps: Primo for pre-k

through kindergarten, and Spark for 1st through 5th grade. Camps are held throughout the Bay Area, with the San Francisco location in Hayes Valley.

**GALILEO CAMPS**  
[www.galileo-camps.com](http://www.galileo-camps.com)

The mission of Galileo Camps is to create a world of fearless innovators. The programs use the "Galileo Innovation Approach," or GIA, adapted from the Institute of Design at Stanford, with an emphasis on the innovator mindset and process.

There are two San Francisco locations for Galileo's Innovation Camp for Kids: the Brandeis School and New Traditions Elementary School. The camps are for pre-k to 5th grade, and 5th to 8th grade.

### A call to create

At home, we've decided to start tinkering with two projects. The first will be working together as a family to sand, paint, and decorate a board for measuring our heights.

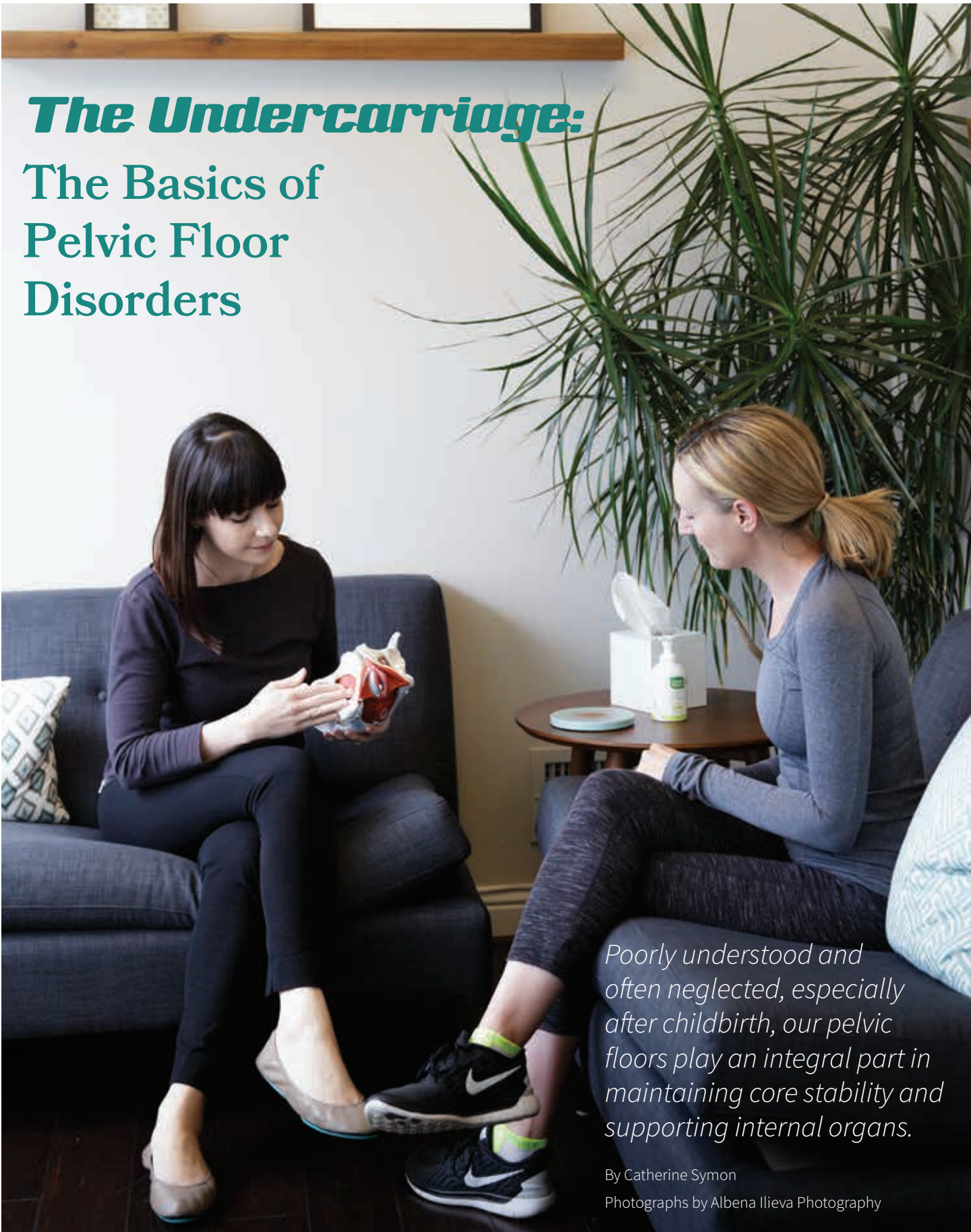
Living in a rental, we don't want to lose this precious documentation on a door jam, so we are making one that will travel with us wherever we go. The second, slightly more ambitious project, is to gather the neighborhood kids for a tinkering session using wood, sand paper, and perhaps some simple wheels and fasteners so the little learners can create blocks, a go-kart, or whatever they dream up.

The unchecked joy and curiosity that little ones bring to those around them is magical. Making and tinkering allow children to explore and learn in their own way—you just never know what will happen once you open up the creative channels at home and let your child's imagination run free. ❖

*Tara is a marketing professional who specializes in commercial real estate ventures as well as freelance writing. She blogs at [www.TheDailyWrites.com](http://www.TheDailyWrites.com) about the things she is passionate about: the hairy underbelly of life, motherhood, and entrepreneurship.*



# *The Undercarriage:* The Basics of Pelvic Floor Disorders



*Poorly understood and often neglected, especially after childbirth, our pelvic floors play an integral part in maintaining core stability and supporting internal organs.*

By Catherine Symon  
Photographs by Albena Ilieva Photography

Six weeks after giving birth to her first child, Whitney Miller had a routine postpartum exam and got the all-clear to exercise and have sex again. Whitney was an avid runner, so the news should have been welcome to her. But even as the obstetrician was giving her the green light, Whitney felt something wasn't right. Weeks after the initial pain and swelling of her uncomplicated vaginal birth had subsided, she was still experiencing an odd heaviness inside her abdomen. She also constantly felt the need to hold her insides in place with a never-ending Kegel. But Whitney wasn't sure what to say, and the topic never surfaced; the obstetrician did a brief physical exam, asked a few rote questions about Whitney's mental health, and the appointment ended.

which could make her symptoms even worse. Annemarie taught her the correct technique and sent her home with a list of exercises catered to her particular needs.

To supplement the physical therapy, Whitney consulted with Haley Shevener, head of methodology and pre/postnatal exercise specialist at The Lotus Method, a San Francisco-based fitness center for pre- and



Whitney left the doctor's office hoping things would return to normal on their own. She attempted to get back into an exercise routine multiple times, but each time, she was forced to stop as her symptoms got worse. Sex with her husband was uncomfortable and had to be put on hold, making her worry their sex life would never be the same. Even wearing thong underwear became impossible. Whitney talked to her husband about what was happening, but no one else—it was too embarrassing, and, to her inner athlete, her symptoms felt like a failure.

*PFDs are underreported because many women are either too embarrassed to seek help or are unaware that they have a disorder.*

It wasn't until her son turned 1 that Whitney accepted that her discomfort was not normal and decided it was time to seek help. She made an appointment with Annemarie Everett Lepe, PT, DPT, at Miracle Physical Therapy, a practice in Noe Valley that specializes in treating pelvic floor dysfunction. In her first session, Whitney learned that her pelvic floor muscles and connective tissue had weakened in such a way that her internal organs were pushing into her vagina, a condition called prolapse. She also learned that she was doing Kegels incorrectly,

postnatal women. Haley evaluated Whitney's posture, breathing, and overall movement and found that Whitney's habits of tucking her tailbone and breathing only in her chest (without letting her abdomen expand) were compounding her pelvic floor issues. Armed with Haley's advice on postural and breathing changes, plus some tips on how to pick up and carry her son in a way that is friendly to her pelvic floor, Whitney went home and started her pelvic floor homework.

## What is the pelvic floor?

The pelvis is a sturdy ring composed of the pubic bone in front, sacrum and tailbone in back, a knobby pair of sitting bones, and flared hip bones on the left and right sides.



In addition to contributing to posture and overall stability, the pelvic bones shelter organs such as the uterus, bladder, and rectum. The pelvic floor (or pelvic diaphragm) is a group of muscles that forms a supportive sling across the bottom opening of the pelvis. In females, the pelvic floor has three openings to allow the urethra, vagina, and rectum each



to pass through. Males have two openings to accommodate the urethra and rectum. The pelvic floor has three major functions. The first is to keep the pelvic organs from falling through the bottom opening of the pelvis. If the pelvic floor and supportive connective tissues are weakened enough, pelvic organs such as the upper vagina, uterus, or rectum can become prolapsed, a condition in which they protrude into the lower vagina or even through the vaginal opening to the outside the body. The second major function of the pelvic floor is to maintain urinary and fecal continence. To do so, the pelvic floor muscles gently compress the urethra and rectum against the pubic bone to prevent urine and feces, respectively, from leaking from the body. Damage to the pelvic floor compromises the compression of the urethra and rectum and can lead to urinary and fecal incontinence. Urinary incontinence

is the most common type of pelvic floor dysfunction. The pelvic floor muscles are one of four major muscle groups that make up the core muscles. The core connects the upper body to the lower body, so a third major function of the pelvic floor is to help stabilize and balance the body during everyday movement. Dysfunction in the pelvic floor therefore decreases overall core strength and stability, which, in turn, can contribute to lower back pain and other injuries.

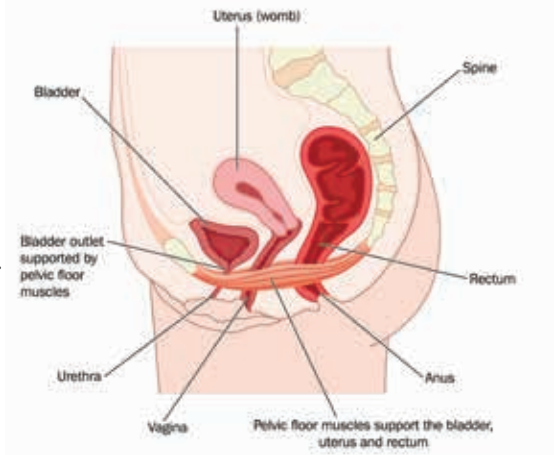
What causes pelvic floor disorders?

Both men and women experience pelvic floor disorders (PFDs), the group of ailments that includes urinary incontinence, fecal incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, and pelvic pain. For women, the most common causes of PFDs are pregnancy and vaginal childbirth. During pregnancy, the hormone relaxin softens the ligaments between the pelvic bones. This prepares the pelvis for vaginal birth, but the decrease in stability puts extra strain on the pelvic floor muscles, which have to work harder to perform their usual functions. Add to that the increasing weight of the growing fetus and uterus and the pelvic floor is literally being stretched to its limit. Over the 40 weeks of pregnancy the overlapping muscle fibers can be pulled out of their optimum alignment, leading to loose or weak muscles that no longer operate in their ideal range of motion.

Women who give birth vaginally are at risk of additional injury. Prolonged pushing strains the already overextended pelvic floor, and larger fetuses can rupture muscles as they exit the birth canal. Pelvic floor muscles may be torn during delivery (perineal laceration), especially with the use of forceps, or cut by episiotomy.

How common are PFDs?

Statistics on how many women have PFDs vary widely. PFDs are underreported because many women are either too embarrassed to seek help or are unaware that they have a disorder. According to Annemarie Lepe at Miracle Physical Therapy, this is particularly common among women whose primary or



Common risk factors for PFDs

- Pregnancy
- Vaginal birth
- Prolonged pushing during labor
- Large fetus
- Forceps delivery
- Tearing during delivery
- Episiotomy
- Excessive heavy lifting
- Chronic coughing
- Frequent straining due to constipation
- Hysterectomy
- Radiation treatment on the pelvis
- Obesity
- Advanced age

Sources: National Institutes of Health, Merck Manual, Pelvic Pain: Diagnosis and Management

only symptom is pain during sexual intercourse. “When painful intercourse occurs before childbirth, women assume or are told that their issues are normal and ‘all in their head’ and they just need to relax or use more lubricant. It’s often much more complex than that, and requires the consideration of the nervous system and musculoskeletal system.” Many women simply accept symptoms of PFDs as their new normal, which probably stems from a lack of general knowledge about treatment options. On this

point, Annemarie adds: “We are conditioned to believe that having a child means sacrificing strength and function; my patients regularly tell me that they’ve been told that crossing their legs when they sneeze for the rest of their lives is a part of the deal. Many physicians and care providers are unaware that physical therapy for the pelvic floor is even a resource that they can refer their patients to.”

The pelvic floor physical therapy field is growing, but too often PFDs are left unrecognized and untreated. Liz Miracle, MSPT, WCS, founder and owner of Miracle Physical Therapy, shares her thoughts: “There are not nearly enough PTs who do this work. I travel the country educating physical therapists interested in the field and attempt to spark interest, in the hope that one day it will be completely normal for a woman to ask to leave work early to go to her pelvic PT appointment and no one will bat an eyelash.”

Treating and mitigating PFDs

PFDs often go untreated, but they are treatable. Serious cases may require surgery, but many women can get their pelvic function back to normal (or close to normal) with prescribed exercise and other therapies. Furthermore, you don’t have to experience symptoms before seeking help from a physical therapist. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, you can follow a therapy

Kegels aren’t for everyone

Pelvic floor contractions, or “Kegels,” have become known in the mainstream as effective exercises for strengthening the pelvic floor. But Kegels aren’t appropriate for everyone. PFDs arise when the pelvic floor muscles are either too loose or too tight. Doing Kegels can actually magnify problems if your pelvic floor muscles are tight. Furthermore, many women

unknowingly do Kegels incorrectly (squeezing the wrong muscles, practicing in the wrong position for their level of strength, or holding contractions for too short or too long), which can cause other dysfunction or decrease the effectiveness of the exercises. Consult with an experienced provider before incorporating Kegels into your routine.

program before and during pregnancy to mitigate the effects of pregnancy and vaginal birth on your pelvic floor. According to Liz Miracle, this is particularly important for women going through subsequent pregnancies; the stressful effects on the pelvic floor are additive and taking care while pregnant can prevent or mitigate worse problems down the road.

What happens at a pelvic PT appointment?

A typical first appointment with a pelvic physical therapist (PT) starts with a conversation about your symptoms and their impact on your life, your health history, and your goals for treatment. The PT then conducts a gentle pelvic exam to confirm the

diagnosis. Unlike other settings, no stirrups or speculum are used in a PT pelvic exam. Experienced PTs are also very sensitive to and understanding about discomfort since all of their patients have pelvic dysfunction. If you are concerned about pain or embarrassment be sure to tell the PT; you are free to opt out of the pelvic exam. The PT likely has a good idea of what is going on and may still be able to design a treatment program for you. During the last part of the appointment the PT will walk you through the prescribed exercises and check your technique. Expect to be sent home with pelvic floor homework and attend follow-up appointments every few weeks to check on your progress and adjust your treatment plan as needed.

Sweet recovery

Just six weeks into her therapy, Whitney Miller is exercising without pain and enjoying sex with her husband. She calls the improvement to her life “tremendous.” Looking back on how long she suffered in silence, Whitney hopes others can learn from her experience: “I think that everyone, especially women who have had a child through either a vaginal birth or a c-section, should have their pelvic floor examined by a PT after having a child. It’s a small cost, either out of pocket or out of insurance, for a huge return.” ♦

Catherine is a medical writer. Her very full life has gotten even better since she (finally) started addressing her own pregnancy- and birth-related injuries, including PFD.

Symptoms of PFDs	Common symptoms
Urinary incontinence	Leaking urine
Fecal incontinence	Leaking feces
Pelvic organ prolapse	Heaviness or bulging in the lower abdomen
	Pain or discomfort during intercourse
Reduced core strength and stability	Lower back pain
	Other injuries caused by a weak core
Sources: Merck Manual, National Institutes of Health, Voices for PFD (American Urogynecologic Society), Pelvic Floor Disorders Network, Cleveland Clinic	





## Fueling Up: Can You Learn to Love Breakfast Again?

*Muffins, smoothies, or last night's leftovers—  
you can make breakfast more fun,  
more fulfilling, and less stressful.*

By Maggie Biroscak

Photographs by Lindsay Lovier Photography

If the supposed benefits of breakfast could be packaged into a pill, everyone would take it. Depending on which study you read, breakfast is purported to lower your risk of obesity and diabetes, improve your concentration and memory, increase heart health, and inspire healthier eating habits throughout the day.

But of course, breakfast doesn't come in a pill. You have to actually prepare it and eat it. Sounds simple enough, except if you're trying to get everyone out the door on a busy weekday morning.

Today, families are working more than ever, and households with stay-at-home parents are the exception rather than the norm. Yet despite all the services popping up to make dinnertime easier, very few even touch on breakfast. Munchery will send you a bran muffin, and Sprig will take care of weekend brunch, but if you want a healthful breakfast that's ready to go while you get your kids out the door, you're pretty much on your own.

For those of us who have trouble getting a solid breakfast in the morning, there's some good news. First, a closer look at the science shows that breakfast may not be as crucial as we've been led to believe. Second, there are a lot of options for easy breakfasts that you can feel good about eating each morning. By implementing just a few new strategies and adding one or two recipes to your repertoire, you can put together some quick, healthy breakfasts that will get everyone excited to eat breakfast again.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



### Scrambled Egg Muffins with Veggies

**Prep time:** 15 minutes

**Cook time:** 15 minutes

**Makes 6 muffins**

#### INGREDIENTS:

7 eggs  
2 to 3 strips of bacon or 2 oz sausage or ground meat (e.g. beef, turkey, or chicken)  
½ small onion, diced  
¼ cup vegetables, cut into small pieces (e.g. spinach, chard, broccoli, or asparagus)  
shredded cheese for sprinkling (e.g. cheddar or gruyere)

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees.
2. Whisk eggs together in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Sauté meat in a pan on medium heat until cooked through. If using bacon or sausage, cut into small pieces before cooking.
4. Remove meat from pan and set aside, then add diced onion to the meat drippings (you may need a little additional oil) and cook until soft.
5. Add vegetables to the onion and cook until soft (if they are precooked, this will only take a couple of minutes). Season with salt and pepper.
6. Portion out the vegetables and meat equally into each cup of a well-greased muffin tin (you can also use paper or silicone liners).
7. Sprinkle shredded cheese into each cup.
8. Pour egg mixture into each muffin cup until ¾ full.
9. Bake for 15 to 18 minutes. You'll know they are done if you shake the muffin tin and they don't jiggle.

**VARIATIONS:** Try this recipe with frozen vegetables, diced potatoes, or even rice. Just be sure ingredients are pre-cooked before adding to the muffin tins.

**NOTE:** Reheat baked muffins in the oven or for about 15 seconds in the microwave.



### Breakfast Quinoa Bowl

**Prep time:** 2 minutes

**Cook time:** 15 minutes

**Makes 1 serving**

#### INGREDIENTS:

½ cup cooked quinoa, any variety  
⅛ teaspoon cinnamon  
¼ cup almond milk (or substitute any kind of milk you prefer)  
¼ cup your choice of fresh berries, Craisins or dried cherries, pecans or walnuts  
drizzle of honey  
1 teaspoon chia seeds (optional)  
pinch of salt

1. Cook quinoa according to package instructions. It's easiest to make a large batch and keep in your fridge for the week, portioning your breakfast out as you need it.
2. In a microwave-safe bowl, stir ½ cup of cooked quinoa with ¼ cup almond milk. Add chia seeds if using. Microwave for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Add berries and/or dried fruit and nuts, a drizzle of honey, and a pinch of salt. Stir and serve.

**VARIATIONS:** Try topping your quinoa with coconut or other kinds of chopped nuts—anything goes.



### Fruit Crunch Smoothie Bowl

*As with the other recipes, amounts here don't need to be exact. The goal is to create a thick consistency in the blender that's easy to spoon into a bowl and eat.*

**Prep time:** 5 minutes (or more if you are trying to make your bowl Instagram-worthy)

**Makes 2 bowls**

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 ½ cups frozen berries  
½ frozen banana  
1 cup almond milk, regular milk, plain yogurt, or kefir  
drizzle of honey

#### SUGGESTED TOPPINGS:

Sliced almonds  
Granola  
Shredded coconut  
Chia seeds  
Cacao nibs  
Hemp seeds

1. Blend together frozen ingredients, honey, and part of the milk or yogurt. Add more milk or yogurt as needed to achieve desired consistency.
2. Spoon smoothie into bowl and garnish with toppings of your choice.

**NOTE:** You can also sneak some veggies in by blending a handful of baby spinach into the fruit/yogurt mixture—no one will be the wiser.

*Rachel Monas, a postpartum and birth doula,...  
knows [her clients] need a breakfast that's nutritious,  
reheatable, and easy to eat with one hand.*



What if you don't like eating breakfast?

If you're feeling guilty about your breakfast habits (or lack thereof), you can relax a little bit.

The conventional wisdom that breakfast is "the most important meal of the day" has been a part of our communal understanding for what seems like forever. Yet despite years of pro-breakfast advertising and health advice, there actually haven't been many rigorous, carefully controlled studies to back

There are a lot of options for easy breakfasts that you can feel good about eating each morning.

it up. Most published studies are simply observational, making it difficult to separate correlation and causation. Does eating breakfast make you healthy, or do healthier people just tend to eat breakfast?

In a rare case of a randomized, controlled study on breakfast, results were inconclusive. A 2014 study from the University of Bath (*The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, August 2014) assigned "lean" volunteers randomly to either eat or skip breakfast for six weeks. At the end of the study, their weight, cholesterol levels, resting metabolic rates, and blood sugar profiles were basically unchanged, and no significant difference was noted between groups. The researchers also found that, contrary to popular belief, the breakfast skippers weren't more likely to pig out later in the day—they actually ended up consuming fewer calories on a daily basis (turns out subjects who consumed breakfast performed more "light exercise" to cancel out the additional calories).

According to the study's lead researcher, Dr. James Betts, "The belief that breakfast is 'the most important meal of the day' is so widespread...[yet] there is a lack of scientific evidence showing whether or how breakfast may directly cause changes in our health." In fact, Betts confessed to *The New York Times* that he himself is a breakfast skipper. "I almost never have breakfast," he said. "That was part of my motivation for conducting this research, as everybody was always telling me

off and saying I should know better." Bottom line (for adults): if you like breakfast, eat it. If you don't, don't.

What if my kids say they don't want breakfast?

There are common-sense reasons to try to get your kids to eat breakfast. "Children are in a critical period of growth and development and they can't afford to miss a meal," says Hilda Carey, a board-certified specialist in pediatric nutrition. Because they go to bed earlier, kids will typically have fasted longer

by the time morning comes, and they will also be more active during the day than those of us sitting at a desk.

So, while you'd be fine to skip breakfast if you were sitting alone at the table with your coffee (and when was the last time *that* happened?), if you've got kids in the house it's a good idea to set the right example. "Parents should model what they want their children to do," says Carey. "If [breakfast is] important for children, it should be important for adults."

Breakfast ideas for busy mornings

Okay, then. Breakfast isn't the end-all-be-all, so we can relax about that. But if you want to boost your breakfast game, here are some simple, non-stressful ideas for you and your kids.

Make a muffin out of it

When Rachel Monas, a postpartum and birth doula based in Berkeley, cooks for her clients, she knows they need a breakfast that's nutritious, reheatable, and easy to eat with one hand. That's where the muffin tin comes in. "I like baking eggs in muffin tins because you can use vegetables you might have left over from last night's dinner, like broccoli or asparagus," she says. It also provides a lot of flexibility. If you'd rather go vegetarian, just leave out the meat and saute your vegetables in olive oil instead. "Don't worry about the exact measurements," she adds. "The whole

point is that you can make it with whatever you have on hand."

Try dinner for breakfast

If your kids aren't big eaters in the morning, think outside the typical Grand Slam breakfast. My own mother, a retired preschool teacher, used to see many parents arrive at school at their wit's end after breakfast battles with their kids. "I used to tell parents that there was no rule they had to serve cereal or eggs in the morning," she says. "Suddenly a lightbulb would go on when they realized they could just serve a favorite lunch or dinner meal instead." One family she remembered finally found something their daughter liked in the morning: minestrone soup. Other easy options include english muffin pizza, cheese tortellini, chicken fingers, or even a turkey sandwich.

Go with the grain

High-protein quinoa isn't just for dinner—it makes a great hot breakfast cereal alternative to oatmeal. It also has a few advantages over the traditional staple: you can make a big pot of it ahead of time and keep it in your fridge, and it won't get gluey if you take it to go and want to reheat it later on.

Switch out hot for cold

The hot breakfast may be the old fashioned gold standard, but why not go cold instead? For picky eaters, a smoothie bowl might be just the ticket. It's pretty, open to lots of customization, and bears a striking similarity to frozen yogurt. The trick is to make a typical smoothie base using fresh fruit and milk or yogurt, but to keep it thick and spoon-friendly. Then portion it into a bowl, add some fun toppings, and enjoy. ❖

Maggie Biroscak is a mom and freelance writer/editor living in San Francisco. She blogs about recipes at [www.rookerysf.wordpress.com](http://www.rookerysf.wordpress.com).



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## ***What's in Your Trunk?*** Planning for the Unexpected

*You often don't know when you'll be heading to the hospital, but you can know what to bring.*

By Shaheen Bilgrami      Photographs by Lauren Wiser Photography

## Emergency Room Packing Checklist

Some of these items might already be in your diaper bag; others should be easy to grab and go!

## FOR YOUR CHILD

- ☐ Health insurance card and any other medical info, including your child's medical history and a list of current medications, if any, in a plastic folder
- ☐ Copy of child's birth certificate—especially useful if you don't share your child's last name
- ☐ Wet wipes—for easy clean-ups, even if your child is potty-trained
- ☐ Diaper changing mat, diaper cream, and enough diapers for a day
- ☐ Extra set of comfortable clothes/PJs, plus a spare tank top or a short-sleeved top. Choose clothes that are easy to take off, with sleeves that can be rolled up for possible shots, blood draws, or IV insertion. If your child is nauseated/throwing up, you may want to bring an additional set of clothes.
- ☐ A "lovie" or other comfort item
- ☐ A familiar blanket
- ☐ A few compact travel toys/books/sticker or activity sets. It's worth keeping a couple of new, inexpensive toys and activity packs at hand.
- ☐ Refillable water bottle

## FOR YOU

- ☐ Photo ID
- ☐ Cell phone and charger
- ☐ Tablet/laptop loaded with entertainment for you/your child, plus its charger
- ☐ Refillable water bottle
- ☐ Reading material
- ☐ Drinks and snacks (do not give your child anything to eat until you've checked with ER staff, as it can delay procedures or tests)
- ☐ Lip balm
- ☐ Nursing cover (if needed)
- ☐ Spare top (in case of accidents)

## FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD

- ☐ Any medication needed for the day
- ☐ Extra layer of clothing such as sweaters or shawls (the ER can get cold)



Staying overnight? Send someone home to pick up these essentials.

Toiletries:

- ☐ Hairbrushes and hair bands
- ☐ Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- ☐ Soap/shower gel
- ☐ Shampoo/conditioner
- ☐ Any other toiletries that you or your child use daily, such as moisturizer or face wash
- ☐ Contact lens solution and case

Clothing and entertainment:

- ☐ Pajamas and slippers
- ☐ A set of clean clothes (top, pants, socks, sweater/hoodie)
- ☐ 2 sets of underwear/extra diapers
- ☐ An extra sweater or hoodie for additional warmth
- ☐ If taking a laptop, or if the hospital provides a player, additional DVDs/CDs
- ☐ A few additional toys and books. Choose items with extra “play value” that will keep your child occupied for longer. Stickers/sticker kits are great for all ages. Magnet scenes are great for older kids.

## Know Where to Go

**Pediatric Emergency  
Department CPMC**  
3700 California St.  
San Francisco, CA 94118  
415.600.4444

**UCSF Children's  
Emergency Department**  
1975 4th St., First Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94158  
415.353.1818

## Labor and Delivery Packing Checklist

## FOR LABOR

Paperwork:

- ☐ Picture ID and health insurance information—it's useful to have this in a plastic folder, to keep it safe and so that you can add any additional papers you get while at the hospital!
- ☐ Birth plan
- ☐ Notebook and pen
- ☐ List of phone numbers of people to call to inform of the birth

Toiletries and comfort:

- ☐ Facial wipes or washcloth, for freshening up during labor
- ☐ Hair ties/headbands and hairbrush
- ☐ Lip balm—lips can get really dry during labor and delivery
- ☐ Straws
- ☐ Sports drink for hydration—check with your OB/GYN that this is OK
- ☐ Hard candy to suck on during labor
- ☐ Spare top (in case of accidents)

## Technology:

- ☐ Camera, charger, and extra memory card
- ☐ Tablet/MP3 player/e-reader with charger

Optional:

- ☐ Birthing ball
- ☐ Massage oil/lotion/powder
- ☐ Massager/rice-filled socks for back-pain relief during labor
- ☐ Two-piece swimsuit, if you're planning to use the birthing pool
- ☐ Spray bottle with water for cooling down during labor
- ☐ Refillable water bottle

**FOR BABY**

Check to see what the hospital will provide before you pack.

## Essentials:

- ☐ Properly fitted car seat (required by California law)
- ☐ Diapers, baby wipes, and baby wash, if you have preferred brands
- ☐ An outfit to go home in, preferably with feet
- ☐ Outer layers such as hat, coat, and mittens for the ride home
- ☐ Warm blanket for the ride home
- ☐ Emery boards to file baby's sharp nails

Optional:

- ☐ Cute baby outfit or pretty receiving blanket for photos
- ☐ Velcro swaddle for baby in case you have a mini-Houdini on your hands
- ☐ Nursing pillow
- ☐ Shawl, wrap, or nursing cover

**FOR A TWO-DAY HOSPITAL STAY\***

Clothes:

- ☐ Open-front nightgown—the hospital will provide gowns, but you might find your own more comfortable
- ☐ 3 x nursing bras or tanks—tanks are particularly useful as you can wear them alone or layered
- ☐ Slippers or non-slip socks (many hospitals actually provide you with these!)
- ☐ Cheap flip-flops for use in the shower
- ☐ 2 x larger size drawstring pants/yoga pants or loose maternity pants
- ☐ 2 x hoodies
- ☐ Button-front shirts
- ☐ Maternity underwear, which you will probably need to throw away after use.  
Most hospitals do provide disposable underwear.
- ☐ Bath towel (hospital towels can be small and thin)—choose one with a distinctive color or print for easy identification
- ☐ Going-home clothes for you (tops should be breastfeeding-friendly if you plan to nurse)
- ☐ Breast pads

Toiletries:

- ☐ Shower gel/soap
- ☐ Shampoo and conditioner
- ☐ Products for skincare routine such as face wash, toner, and moisturizer
- ☐ Stick with mild-smelling or fragrance-free deodorant, bearing in mind that your baby might be sensitive to sprays
- ☐ Toothbrush, toothpaste, and mouthwash
- ☐ Nipple cream
- ☐ Basic makeup kit—you know you want to look good for those first photos!

Comfort:

- ☐ Your own pillow—use a distinctive pillow case so that it doesn't get confused with hospital linens
- ☐ High-energy healthy snacks such as granola bars—nursing can make you ravenous!
- ☐ \$20 in change for vending machines, etc.

*\*Vaginal births usually require two nights in the hospital. If you have a c-section or if there are complications, you will need additional supplies as you will probably be staying in hospital for four or more days.*



*Shaheen Bilgrami is a freelance writer and editor and is a contributor to [www.blog.littlelane.com](http://www.blog.littlelane.com). She is also the mom of an energetic preschooler. Contact her through her website, [www.shaheenbilgrami.com](http://www.shaheenbilgrami.com).*





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NEIGHBORHOOD MEETUPS: Marina/Cow Hollow

The **Marina/Cow Hollow Neighborhood** Meetup subgroup has been re-energized with new volunteers who are actively planning events for moms and families in the neighborhood. We have a number of exciting summer meetups in the works! Neighborhood Director Julie Stewart (mom to Jack) leads weekly Tuesday stroller runs/walks, while Neighborhood Ambassadors Sonja Augustin (Isabelle) and soon-to-be mom Virginie Holive host weekly Thursday meetups and monthly beach play dates. Carla Negri (Harper) and Nellyn Hecktman (Hugh) are busy planning moms nights out, while Andrina Knobel (Willard) will soon be organizing a new monthly playgroup.

Please join us for one of our many events! We also look forward to planning more exciting activities this summer, and we are always looking for suggestions and volunteers to help us. You can also connect with us on Facebook: join “GGMG Marina Moms” at [tinyurl.com/GGMGMarinaMoms](https://www.tinyurl.com/GGMGMarinaMoms).



Weekly Croissant Meetup at Le Marais Bakery

Love croissants and want to meet other moms and moms-to-be? Join us for a little midday treat!

- DATE:** Thursdays
- TIME:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** 2066 Chestnut St.
- COST:** FREE

**REGISTRATION:** [www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96560294](http://www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/96560294)



Beach Play Date

Do you like laying on the sand, enjoying the sun, and playing with your little ones? Meet at the Beach Hut Café and settle down on some blankets on the beach to play with the kiddos and have a great time. All are welcome, including expecting moms.

- DATE:** Friday, July 15
- TIME:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1199 E. Beach
- COST:** FREE

**REGISTRATION:** [www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97293941](http://www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97293941)

Tuesday Weekly Stroller Run/Walk

Meet fellow GGMG moms while getting a little exercise along the Marina Green. Run or walk, with or without your stroller. All abilities are welcome (you pick the pace and distance; we generally do two to five miles).

- DATE:** Tuesdays
- TIME:** 9 to 10:30 a.m.
- PLACE:** Blue Fitness Courts at Marina Blvd. & Webster St.
- COST:** FREE

**REGISTRATION:** [www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97172369](http://www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97172369)

Family Picnic at Off the Grid Presidio

Spend a leisurely Sunday with fellow GGMG families picnicking together at Off the Grid Presidio.

- DATE:** Sunday, July 10
- TIME:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** RSVP for exact meetup location
- COST:** FREE

**REGISTRATION:** [www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97172493](http://www.bigtent.com/home/calendar/event/97172493)

GET CONNECTED

Connect with other moms in your neighborhood by joining your Neighborhood Meetup subgroup on BigTent. From wine nights to playgroups, there are 11 neighborhoods hosting events every week! Contact Tracy at [andreassen.tracy@gmail.com](mailto:andreassen.tracy@gmail.com) for more information on what's happening in your neighborhood.

KIDS ACTIVITIES

Ready. Set. Safe! A Safety and Preparedness Fair for Families at Recess

Recess is hosting a neighborhood safety event for families to learn different ways to stay safe in any situation. A variety of health and safety experts and resources will be on hand, including information on CPR, earthquake preparedness, and car seat safety. La Petite Baleen will also be there to educate parents about water safety at 11 a.m., and little ones will enjoy a visit from a San Francisco Fire Department fire truck!

- DATE:** Sunday, June 12
- TIME:** 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- PLACE:** 470 Carolina St.
- COST:** FREE

**REGISTRATION:** Visit [www.recess-sf.com/events](http://www.recess-sf.com/events) for more details and to sign up.

JUST FOR MOMS

An Afternoon of Yoga and Wine at the Pad Studios

Join fellow moms for a Sunday afternoon vinyasa flow followed by some tasty vino! Instructor Bryant Resch will lead you through an all-levels vinyasa flow in one of the city's most beautiful yoga studios. Stay after class and mingle with other moms while you enjoy wines by Eleven Eleven Winery and snacks by 10 Day Health Challenge.

- DATE:** Sunday, June 26
- TIME:** 2 to 4 p.m.
- PLACE:** 1694 Union St.
- COST:** \$15

**REGISTRATION:** [www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/97180079](http://www.bigtent.com/group/calendar/event/97180079)

GGMG Kids Activities held an earth-tastic picnic party at Julius Kahn playground on Earth Day weekend!

Our wiggle worms got the ants out of their pants by participating in scavenger hunts and collecting twigs, leaves, and bugs. Everyone won a prize, which included bubbles, seeds, blankets, and water bottles. Sterling Johnson, “The Bubble Smith,” put on a spectacular show and kids got to make their own bubbles using his cool tools. Friendly UrbanSitter volunteers helped out with our planting table and sensory area. They taught older kids and parents how to plant their own succulents to take home, while the little ones splashed around with floating and sinking animals and dug through

organic cocoa shells to find hidden creatures.

Once the kids were finished getting their hands dirty, they learned about reducing, reusing, and recycling with coloring and reading materials provided by Recology. Thanks to Hallo Spoon, we had applesauce and banana muffins prepared from organic, sustainable, locally sourced ingredients. GGMG also provided coffee and fresh organic fruit for everyone to enjoy.

Talk about an afternoon full of nature in this urban jungle! Hope to see you all at future events!



GGMG Halloween Spooktacular

- DATE:** Saturday, October 1
- TIME:** 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- PLACE:** Sharon Meadows in Golden Gate Park
- COST:** Free for GGMG members, their families, and guests



Committee Spotlight: *Webteam*

**Describe the personality of your committee.**  
Laissez-faire. We like to let forum discussions flow with as little interference as possible. However, we are always happy to help whenever a member has a problem.

**Why do you do what you do? What has been an unexpected benefit of your involvement?**  
We are all addicted to the forums. One unexpected benefit is that when we list our position on our resumes, people think we are somewhat tech savvy!

**What types of activities or projects do you undertake?**  
We approve anonymous posts, review caregiver postings to ensure they include all the information in the template, review flagged posts, monitor forum discussions, answer questions about posting to the forums, watch for suspicious activity, and develop new guidelines on rare occasions as needed. Each of our moderators is assigned to one day of the week.

**How do you know when you are making a difference?**  
When we go a few weeks without having to put up the standard message that the thread contains comments that violate the GGMG Forum Guidelines. Seriously though, we take pride in keeping the forums a safe space for all moms.

**Who are your current volunteers?**  
Co-chairs: Ushma Upadhyay and Heather Beckstead. Moderators: Cate Rachford, Patricia Ortiz, Irene Li, Merryn Searchfield, Nathania Cantanucci, and Nireeksha Reddy. GGMG website editor: Erin Shaw.

**What's next?**  
Within the next year or two we expect to have a new web platform for the forums. Until then, we'll just keep the forums running.

**How can interested GGMG members get involved?**  
We are not currently seeking new volunteers, but we usually need a webteam member every few months. If interested, please reach out to us at [webteam@ggm.org](mailto:webteam@ggm.org) and we will be in touch the next time we have an opening.

Operations: Co-Chair Appreciation Event

This May, board members and volunteer committee co-chairs gathered at the Mission Bowling Club for the 2016 Co-Chair Appreciation Dinner. It was a super fun night of eating, drinking, and, naturally, bowling! The high scorers of the night were Tracy Andreassen and Kirsten Pflieger, whose dark-horse bowling prowess won them each a copy of *The Big Lebowski*. Congratulations also to the evening's raffle winners: Kelly Cohen, Tracy Andreassen, Ushma Upadhyay, and Virginia Green. Each month, we celebrate the work our great volunteers do by choosing a volunteer of the month and for May we chose a co-chair of the month: thank you Cori Lu for all of your hard work!

Special thanks to the businesses who helped us make this evening happen by donating and discounting services:

- **Kristal's Kitchen** ([kristalskitchen@gmail.com](mailto:kristalskitchen@gmail.com)) provided custom cupcakes for all attendees
- **Papersource** ([www.papersource.com](http://www.papersource.com)) provided discount codes for all attendees
- **Ancestry** ([www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)) provided the Ancestry DNA kit for our raffle
- **Minted** ([www.minted.com](http://www.minted.com)) provided gift cards for our raffle
- **Mission Bowling Club** ([www.missionbowlingclub.com](http://www.missionbowlingclub.com)) hosted the event



Member Support By Vicky Keston

How do we choose to trust people? Each time we post on GGMG, we trust that our fellow moms will keep our confidence, that they will give us advice, and that they will respect our need for support. In the eight years since I joined GGMG, I have endeavored to support my fellow moms, at first within the forums and later as part of the amazing team of women on the Member Support Committee. As we grow as an organization, there are bound to be the occasional disagreements, but as a whole, I am in awe of the wonderful village that makes up GGMG.

Member Support is a special group of women, those who want to give of their spare time by playing fairy godmother to their fellow moms. We reach out when moms are sad, mad, sick, or just plain stuck. Our team takes trust and privacy seriously; we value our relationship with each mom and treasure her trust in us. Each of our volunteers has outside responsibilities—all have children, most have full-time jobs, and many volunteer in their children’s schools. We give of our time because we care deeply about each one of you.

Likewise, we also trust that you will know when to come to us. Your anonymous posts truly are anonymous, and nobody tries to lift the veil of anonymity. When you are ready, we are waiting at [member.support@ggm.org](mailto:member.support@ggm.org). You can count on us.

Recruiting

*Have You Thought about Volunteering with GGMG? Now Is the Time to Join!*

There are SO many benefits of being a volunteer—meeting other moms, being part of a great community, expanded discounts and benefits from many local and parenting businesses, free GGMG membership after a year of service, and an annual celebration dinner. We really hope you get as much out of it as you give! Keep in mind that there are a wide variety of time commitments and responsibilities. See below for a list of open positions and email [volunteer@ggm.org](mailto:volunteer@ggm.org) to apply today!

- **Community Support: Co-chair of events**
- **Kids Activities: Co-chair; two volunteers**
- **Magazine: Writer; photographer; designer**
- **Membership: Approvals volunteer; member engagement volunteers**
- **Neighborhood Meetups: Directors for NOPA/Alamo Square; Ambassadors for Haight, two for Mission/Castro, two for Nob Hill/ North Beach, two for NOPA/Alamo Square**
- **Operations: Volunteer**
- **Parent Education: Volunteer**
- **Partnerships: Operations manager**
- **Social Events: Co-chair; planning committee volunteer**

Membership

Is it time to renew your GGMG membership?

First off, thank you for your loyalty to GGMG. They say that raising children takes a village, and without members like you, we would not have such a wonderful organization.

When it's time to renew your membership, we hope you'll act quickly to stay a part of our vibrant community of more than 4,300 moms for another year. No longer living in San Francisco? That's OK, you can still renew from your new location and maintain your access to the forums, receive the magazine, and attend GGMG events. GGMG has also raised the age limit to include moms who have a child 11 years old or younger.

New this year: Renew your GGMG membership and be automatically entered into a monthly raffle for an Amazon gift card!

To renew your membership up to 60 days before it expires, simply log into BigTent and click the “Continue Enrollment” link. If you don't see that link, it may mean your membership has already expired, but you can easily re-apply online at [www.ggm.org/join.html](http://www.ggm.org/join.html). If you have any questions, please reach out to us at [membership@ggm.org](mailto:membership@ggm.org).

Thank you for being part of the best mommy community in the city! We look forward to seeing you soon at an event or online.



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# I ♥ Mom

## Wax On, Wax Off

By Sonya Abrams

Cradling my newborn in my arms—the scientifically improbable, long-hoped-for daughter I’d desperately wanted but feared I’d never have—I had only one thought on my mind: I’d kill for her skin.

Motherhood can completely redraw the map of our epidermis: once-smooth terrain gives way to craggy peaks and sunken valleys, and formerly tiny paths become deeply carved boulevards and eight-lane highways of crow’s-feet and worry lines. You look tired, friends would say with a sympathetic head tilt. A solid night’s sleep would brighten my face and iron out the creases. Of course it would. As my number of offspring piled up, I kept pushing the date of rejuvenation further out. After sleep training, that’ll be when my face bounces back. No, maybe after my eldest drops his nap and starts sleeping later.

By the time I gave birth to my third child, the writing on the wall was clear. I hadn’t been carded in years and store clerks now declared me firmly in the “ma’am” camp. Scrutinizing my face in the brutally honest glow of my magnified mirror, a well-loved baseball glove stared back. Or perhaps a thing more reminiscent of a used tissue, once crumpled in a pocket and then hastily flattened. This crisis required an aggressive response.

Like any modern, lazy warrior, I turned to the Internet and spiraled down the wormhole of beauty sub-Reddits and obsessive YouTube skin care channels. The topic of Korean skin care kept appearing in the online chatter. Supposedly all the rage in Korea (an assertion which raised more than one skeptical eyebrow among my Korean friends), the regime consists of an 8- to 14-step nightly process to rid the skin of impurities and prepare the face

### *Scrutinizing my face in the brutally honest glow of my magnified mirror, a well-loved baseball glove stared back.*

for optimal moisturization and rejuvenation. The reviews were positive, so off I trundled to Sephora and walked out weighted down by products. (Tip: if starting this routine yourself, invest in a low-cost line of products at first, to learn how your skin reacts. I relied heavily on the affordable Belif product line.)

According to the routine’s proponents, the following steps are essential: makeup remover in the form of an infused tissue or liquid; an oil cleanser (for removing impurities) followed by a cream cleanser (for a deep clean); an exfoliating scrub to slough off stubborn surface cells; a moisturizing toner to restore pH balance and soothe the skin; an essence (a vaguely defined product that is most often a watery lotion for deep hydration and

skin softening); a serum to target specific trouble spots, like blotchy or dull skin; a sheet mask, which is left on for several minutes, even overnight, and moisturizes deeply; eye cream; night cream; and sunscreen.

That first night, I said a somber goodbye to my friends on HGTV as I headed upstairs a half hour early to shellac my face. Half an hour later, power washed and sticky, I climbed into bed, waiting for my husband to notice the “dewy glow” promised in all the

K-beauty articles. He put down his Kindle. “Are you feeling OK? You look...sweaty.”

Men.

Confident that sweaty was merely a speed bump on the road to dewy, I kept at the regime, though as the days piled up my patience started to wane and I ratcheted down the steps from 11 to 7. So long, face mask. See you later, serum. Daily scrutinizing revealed little change in my skin’s appearance, though after a couple of weeks my face began to feel so soft that I often found my hands stroking my own cheek or chin. I’d gone from looking old to looking creepy.

Despite my diligence, the weeks wore on without bringing me a deluge of compliments, and my resentment grew. The bottles of product mocked me from the medicine cabinet. I dutifully continued to rub, smooth, slather, massage, dot, pat, and scrub. I started to sprout the occasional pimple, not something I was used to and presumably a side effect of basically applying a seven-layer dip to my face.

After two months, my spirit crushed, I was ready to scrap the whole mission. No one was noticing. I was powerless to stop the march of time across my face. Dejected, I hauled myself into the dentist’s office one day for a crown fitting. Partway through the procedure she peered down and frowned.

Great, what now? A root canal? “Your skin,” she said. “It looks amazing. What have you been doing?” Validation! Proof that many

months and dollars weren’t wasted! “Thank you!” I tried to say. “I’ve been waiting for so long for someone to tell me that I don’t need to completely sacrifice my body for motherhood, that my youthfulness doesn’t need to be crushed under a pile of diapers and sleep-training manuals.” But with a mouth compromised by Novocain and a suction wand, I only managed to squeak out “Fangoo. Shooo moosh.”

She knew what I meant. ❖

*Formerly senior editor with The Commonwealth Club and currently a freelance photographer, editor, and the mother of three kids under 5 years old, Sonya has discovered that there is no exfoliator powerful enough to scrub away the effects 12-plus daily diaper changes.*







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