

THE BEST & WORST CITIES TO HAVE A BABY WHERE DOES YOURS RANK?
What to do about stretch marks * First-year breastfeeding guide

HEALTHY MOM, HEALTHY BABY

FitPregnancy

YOUR 9 BIGGEST FEARS

How to stop
worrying about
pregnancy & start
relaxing NOW

DO YOU NEED A BIRTH PLAN?

p. 48

Quell the queasies

Nutrient-packed
foods that ease
morning sickness

p. 100

AB REHAB

Lose your
post-baby belly
p. 54

Eek! A leak!
How to prevent
incontinence
p. 44

**GET THIS
BODY**
(well, almost!)
Gabby Reece's
prenatal
workout even
you can do
p. 96

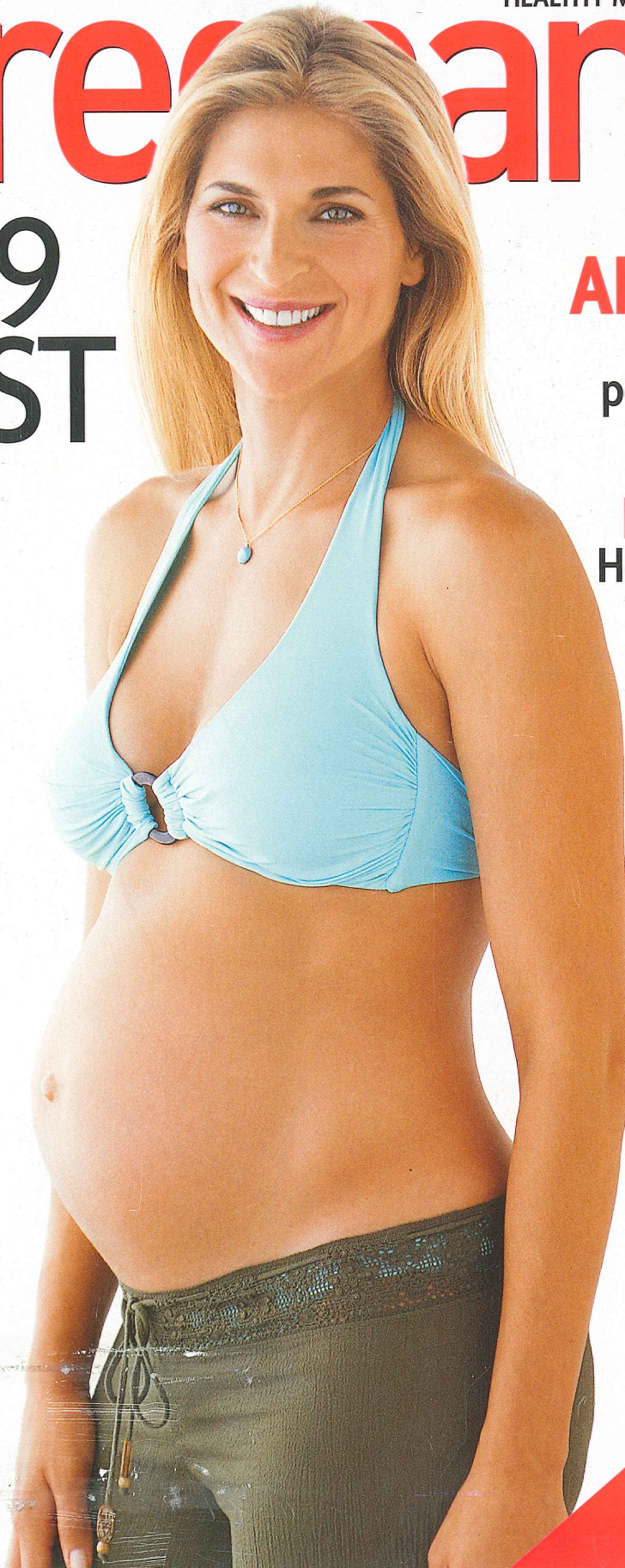
**THE
COOLEST
BABY
CARRIERS**

p. 70

\$4.95 US/\$6.95 Can Feb/March 2008
Display until March 24, 2008



www.fitpregnancy.com





the good enough squat

A less-than-perfect labor position teaches this second-time mom a valuable lesson. > BY NANCY M. WILLIAMS

a COMPULSIVE, LIST-MAKING, double-checking planner, I rarely make last-minute decisions. But eight months into my second pregnancy, I decided I wanted to deliver my daughter from a squatting position instead of the traditional one.

I couldn't explain to my confused husband, David, what had triggered the change in my birth plan. Maybe it was the argument in my natural-birthing book that the beneficent downward pull of gravity would help move our baby out. More likely, it was the book's captivating illustration of a woman in labor, knees deeply bent, hair pulled back smoothly in a ponytail. She looked so powerful, in charge.

My book recommended squatting for one minute, 10 times a day. The first time, I gingerly bent my knees. At 10 seconds, I began to pant. At 20 seconds, I lurched onto the carpet. I cursed myself for not having exercised regularly.

Ten days before my due date, I woke up with tiny contractions pressing my belly like an elastic band. Unfortunately, despite my down-to-the-wire daily practice, I still was unable to squat for as long as the book suggested.

By early afternoon, it was time to push. David and my midwife hoisted me onto the foot of the hospital bed where a squat bar was positioned. Except for my tennis socks, I was stark naked, having flung off my hospital gown in the searing heat of transition. Needless to say, my sweaty, unruly hair was not pulled back sleekly in a ponytail.


But the worst of it was that I couldn't lower myself into a

full squat. Leaning against David, I managed to bend my left leg, but I couldn't seem to get enough balance to let go of my husband, grab the squat bar and bend my right leg too.

Every time I tried to squat all the way down, another contraction surged. So I stayed in my half-squat, one arm flung around David's neck, my useless right leg pawing the sheets for traction. I worried that my left leg would buckle under my weight. I worried that my daughter would get lodged inside me, that my stiff hips would constrict her passage.

But after 10 minutes of pushing, I felt an incredible fullness in the center of my body, a space I didn't have before. When I pressed down again, the fullness shifted lower. My daughter was sliding downward, making her way into the world.

"I can see the head," my midwife said. I bore down. My baby's head squeezed out of me, followed by what felt like a tumbling of little sticks, her tiny legs. The midwife handed me my daughter. I laughed out loud, partly in delight with my baby girl but also from amazement that my crazy, half-cocked, half-squat had worked so well.

Now that my daughter's about to turn 6, I look back with some wonder at my hasty decision to squat. Perhaps I had glimpsed the long road of motherhood, twists so sudden that I would need to draw on agility I didn't know I had. In accepting the journey, I realized I wouldn't be perfect but that I could, like my half-squat, be good enough. 

Nancy M. Williams is a writer and mother of two in Montclair, NJ.