

FAMILY

Custom Childbirth:

Choices from **A** to **Z**

Resources for Both Baby and Mom

Story by Laura Bond Williams

MOTHERS-TO-BE FACE HUNDREDS OF DECISIONS in the months before they give birth. Doctor or midwife? Breast or bottle? Disposable or cloth?

What's a woman to do? Central Texas women have dozens of available resources through area

hospitals, birthing centers, doctor's offices, stores and private consultants. So here's some help. Because when it comes down to it, there are only three things to focus on: the mother, the baby and the birth. Here's our A-to-Z list of good things for ex-

pectant mothers in Central Texas.

A **ACUPUNCTURE** - For many women, it's an effective way to manage discomfort during pregnancy. Ask your doctor or midwife for

See **CUSTOM CHILDBIRTH** on page 64



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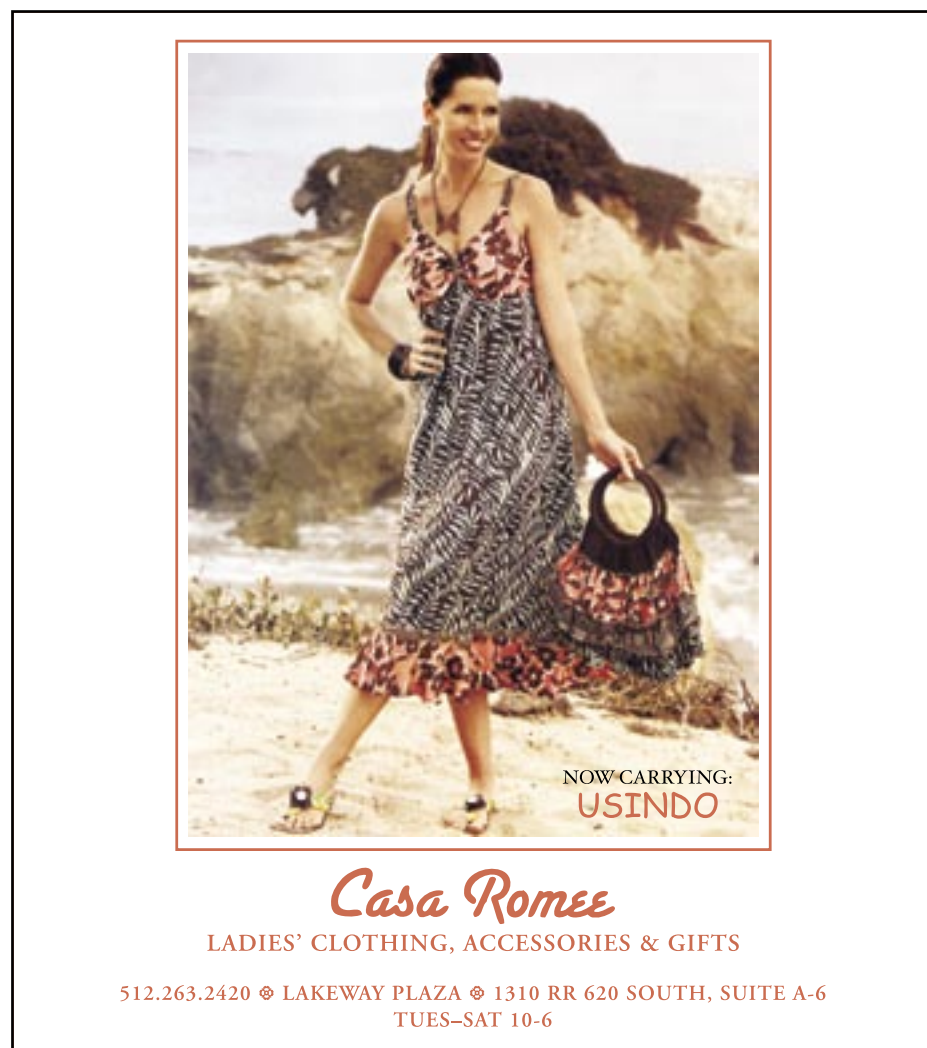
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CUSTOM CHILDBIRTH from page 62
recommendations or visit the Academy of Oriental Medicine at www.aoma.edu.

BLOG - If you don't already have a blog, give birth to one of those, too. You can while away time waiting for baby and then have a place to post photos of your beloved. It's also good sharing your bliss over poopy diapers. Start with www.amalah.com for inspiration.

CHILDBIRTH CLASS - Whether you deliver your child at a hospital, birthing center or home, a class helps you and your partner feel prepared for the process. Certified registered nurse and Lamaze certified childbirth educator Nola Cottom, owner of The Childbearing Years, has helped thousands of women prepare for childbirth. She teaches classes at several local hospitals. Women who plan to give birth at a birthing center or at home may choose classes that teach the Bradley Method or hypnobirthing, which are designed to help women give birth without anesthesia.

DOCTOR - Choosing an obstetrician or midwife for prenatal care and delivery is the beginning. Toward the end of your pregnancy, you'll choose a pediatrician too. Popular author and Austin pediatrician Ari Brown, M.D., blogs on baby care at baby411.typepad.com.

EPIDURAL - A majority of American women choose an epidural for pain during childbirth. Classes usually explain how and when an epidural is given during labor.

FEEDING - Whether breastfeeding or bottle-feeding, new mothers need to learn how to meet their babies' dietary needs. Breastfeeding mothers may benefit from instruction on how to establish breastfeeding during baby's first few months.

GROUPS - Connecting with expecting or new mothers can provide much-needed emotional support. Meetup.com lists more than a dozen informal groups in Austin, plus those affiliated with national organizations such as Mothers and More.

HOSPITAL - Some women choose a hospital before a doctor, says registered nurse Bethany Winder, owner of Baby Bee Basics. Schedule tours to decide where you will be comfortable throughout labor and delivery.

INFANT CARE - A class on baby care basics teaches you to diaper, swaddle and cuddle with confidence. All area hospitals offer courses, and private instruction is also available from mama-owned companies such as Baby Bee Basics and The Mothering Way.

JOURNAL - Not ready to blog? *The Mother's Guide to Self-Renewal* is a journal to help mothers meet their own physical, spiritual, emotional and mental needs.

KEGEL EXERCISES - Pelvic floor contractions are a no-sweat exercise with many benefits, according to Dr. William Sears, author of *The Birth Book*. Aim for 100 each day.

LA LECHE LEAGUE - These free monthly meetings welcome expecting and new mothers who want to breastfeed.

MIDWIFE - Midwives attended approximately 10% of vaginal births in the U.S. in 2003, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Midwives in Central Texas attend births at home and in birthing centers, such as the 20-year-old Austin Area Birthing Center in north Austin. The Association of Texas Midwives provides a directory of midwives in Central Texas.

NESTING INSTINCT - Pregnant women report a surge of energy before they give birth. Enjoy it but don't overdo it, experts say. A perfectly clean house isn't a requirement for parenthood.

ORANGE - Among other healthy eats, Bradley Method instructors recommend eating orange or yellow fruits or vegetables at least five times a week. Think cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, carrots and more.

PARENTHOOD - Not only is a baby born, but a mother and a father too! If you're in a relationship, *Baby-proofing Your Marriage* may help ease the transition into parenthood.

QUICKENING - You feel the baby move! Now's a good time to start thinking about those childbirth classes. Some courses, like the Bradley Method, may take up to 12 weeks.

REGISTRY - When your friends and family want to shower your little one with gifts, a registry helps point them in the right direction.

SUPPORT - Labor support practitioners are known as doulas, who are trained to give physical and emotional support to a woman in labor. Postpartum doulas help mothers after the baby arrives.

TWINS - If you have two on the way, the local chapter of Mothers of Multiples can help you get ready. Find them at austinmoms.org.

UMBILICAL CORD - More families are banking cord blood to preserve stem cells to treat the possible but unlikely threat of future disease. The American Pregnancy Association website explains both private banking and donation options.

VITAMINS - If your doctor or midwife says take them, take them. You and your baby need the extra nutrition to stay strong during pregnancy, delivery and the first year.

W**ATER AEROBICS** - Dive in! A study found that that water aerobics reduced pregnancy-related lower back pain by 50% compared with other forms of exercise.

X One little X makes a big difference. An egg fertilized by an X-chromosome sperm creates a female embryo and a Y-chromosome makes a male. Ultrasound and some prenatal tests can determine the sex of your baby.

Y**OGA** - Prenatal yoga provides gentle exercise and relaxation for your changing body. After baby arrives, enjoy post-natal and toddler classes at studios such as Austin Kula Yoga.

Z**ZZZZ'S** - Catch them while you can. Get a body pillow to snuggle with as your belly expands. Bank as much uninterrupted sleep as you can before your newborn needs you every few hours.

More Austin Links

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www.austinmoms.org
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www.babybeebasics.com
www.childbirth-classes.com
www.consciousbirthingaustin.com
www.debbiedoesdiapers.com
www.hypnobirthingtexas.com
www.seton.net
www.stdavids.com
www.themotheringway.com
www.yogayoga.com/prenatal/resources

National Links

www.americanpregnancy.org
www.childbirth.org
www.dona.org
www.lalecheleague.org
www.marchofdimes.com
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/prenataltesting.html

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