



# Expecting



*From the editors:* Here at *L.A. Parent*, we know that parenting begins before a baby is born – for some, even before a baby is conceived. So we're bringing you this special section for families with a new little bundle in their dreams, on the way, or newly delivered. Look for it again in January, April, July and October of 2011!

## Happy Holidays with Baby

Whether you're pregnant or newly delivered, less is more – lots more – this season

By Lori Zanteson

There is no time like the holidays to celebrate the gift of family and friends. Being pregnant or welcoming a new baby makes the season all the more joyful. But this time of year carries high expectations. We want everything to be perfect, and trying to make it so can easily be too much for a new mom or mom-to-be.

"Pregnant and new mommies have to lower their expectations of themselves during the crazy holiday season," says Thousand Oaks-based parent and family coach Bette Alkazian. Feeling stressed and overwhelmed is not good for anybody, especially Mom and Baby. Alkazian suggests planning ahead so there's as little as possible to do each day or week leading up to the holidays.

### Makin' a List

One effective way to plan, suggests Abbey Claire Keusch

of Abbey Claire Professional Organizing in L.A., is to make a list. "I'm a big fan of lists," says Keusch, who recommends listing all the jobs that need to be done and organizing them in a holiday notebook. The notebook could include a gift list, a recipe list of favorites or those to try, and a list of decorations on hand, those needed, and where they will be displayed. Be sure to note what worked this year and what didn't, to simplify things for next year.

### Share the Joy

With lists in hand, it's time to delegate. "Don't try to take everything on yourself," Keusch advises. "Get the whole family involved." Invite everyone over and have a cooking or a decorating party, and definitely include young kids. Keep them busy coloring butcher paper to wrap gifts or creating decorations. During the bustle, don't hesitate to give Baby some Grandma time in a quiet room of the house, and, "by all means hire somebody to occupy the kids," says Keusch. Little ones get as overwhelmed as the rest of us and time away can benefit everyone.

### Take a Break

Also schedule "me-time." "Plan time to take a break and schedule rest time for you and the kids," says Keusch. It doesn't have to be anything major, though a massage is always nice.

Bradbury mom of two Sharon Palmer, R.D., says walking the dog or pushing the stroller "reduces your stress level, and also helps burn off those extra calories you consume during the holiday season. And when you're exercising," she says, "try to shed your stress. Don't think about everything you have to do, just clear your mind for 30 minutes. It's like meditation!"