

Pregnancy & Motherhood | May 30, 2017

I'm an Ob/Gyn and I Never, Ever Want to Be Pregnant

Opinion: No, thanks. That looks horrible.

By [Leah Torres, M.D.](#)





Leah Torres, M.D. **THE GYNECOLUMNIST**

Pregnancy is a miserable experience. At least that's what some pregnant people tell me. Most of them are my patients. I'm an ob/gyn and a specialist in reproductive health, so I know quite a bit about why pregnancy is terrible. I, fortunately, have never had to suffer through being pregnant (thanks, Planned Parenthood!). Nope, I do not want to give birth. Ever.

The fact that there are people willing to vomit every morning for months on end, deal with hemorrhoids from weeks of constipation, and a myriad of other illness-esque experiences amazes me every time I see them for their prenatal visits.

I couldn't possibly explain why someone would do it, so I asked one of my patients, who was so grateful for the care I gave her during her pregnancies that she was willing to write a few words for me. I cannot paraphrase and do her justice, so here's an excerpt:

If it were not for that intense desire I have to have children, I would absolutely never do this ever in my life. I do not blame anyone who makes the choice not to have kids because pregnancy sucks...**Throwing up does not go away.** This pregnancy is my third...and here I am at 37 weeks and still throwing up. And the crying. You cry all the time...a lot of the time for no reason whatsoever. Then you are so angry that you were crying so you pick a fight with your husband over nothing to justify your no reason for crying. Then there's this point that hits you when you stop having the ability to breathe, at least comfortably. Walking from the living room to the bedroom leaves you winded. While you take that walk, everything hurts and you pretty much want to stop existing because it is so hard.

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I will say this: Delivery is the absolute best part because it cures you of all these ailments. Once that baby is detached from your body, all of a sudden everything goes away and I am not talking figuratively. It isn't because you are so lost in love with your new baby that you forgot how horrible everything was. No, literally the baby was sucking the life out of you for themselves and now that they are out you literally feel better because they are no longer attached. I love my kids more than anything. They are the reason I go through the hell that is pregnancy. I knew I needed them to complete my world, but I will not now nor ever pretend that pregnancy is beautiful and magical because it's not.

Doesn't sound beautiful and magical to me. I also know that it's really quite dangerous. Pregnant people gestate for 9 months, during which time they **incur body changes** and **risk diseases such as diabetes, hypertension**, heart failure, and seizures (to name a few). An interesting set of data from the United Kingdom in 2010 showed that pregnancy is more dangerous (meaning, more likely to kill you) than the following: general anesthesia, hang gliding, SCUBA diving, rock climbing, canoeing, and air travel. In fact, pregnancy is 14 times more dangerous than the next riskiest activity (hang gliding). And the risk of dying from pregnancy and birth is over 10 times higher than the risk of dying from an **abortion**.

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But **our legislators write and pass laws** intending to force people to undergo the risk of dying in pregnancy. Imagine if it were illegal to back out of a SCUBA diving trip or choose to not get on an airplane. If I told you, as you bled to death in the ER, that I would not give you a blood transfusion due to my personal beliefs, would you find that acceptable? Would you be part of a society that did? What changes when you're talking about ending a pregnancy, instead of administering a blood transfusion? I'll answer that for you: "Life." But, no, if you were thinking of the pregnant person's life, you would be mistaken. Their life is not a concern in this scenario. Why would it be? It's not like an actual life is at stake by carrying a pregnancy to term... Oh, wait.

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The way we look at (and legislate around) pregnancy is profoundly backwards. We completely fail to recognize the risks pregnant people take on. Why aren't we celebrating these brave and selfless folks on a weekly basis? Instead, we shrug at them in order to express an unimpressed "That's just what you do" sentiment. Pregnant people suffer for months and risk disease and **death** in order to give birth to an actual human being and all society can do is say, yup, sounds about right *yawn*. That we do not uphold these

Meanwhile, we shame those who do *not* want to be pregnant. “Oh, you’re pregnant and you do *not* want to risk your life and health in order to give birth? Why wouldn’t you want to feel so weak that breathing hurts for days or weeks on end? Why wouldn’t you want to be at significant **risk of a blood clot going to your lungs that might kill you and your baby?** Seizures and strokes can’t be that bad, what’s the big deal?”

We accept this approach to pregnancy as “normal” when it is anything but. Not wanting to be pregnant is as normal as not wanting diabetes, hypertension, heart failure, seizures, etc. Yet we feel justified judging women for it and imposing laws that effectively force them to face these potentially fatal health consequences. Well, personally, I understand what it takes to carry and birth a child, and I understand **not wanting to take that on**. And the more deeply I understand these things, the more assured I am that I want none of it. (But I’ll still be your doctor if you do.)

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*Leah Torres, M.D., is a physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. Twitter: **@LeahNTorres***

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Leah Torres, M.D., is a physician specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. She is SELF's resident Gynecolumnist.



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