

Binding people together.

Let's chat about baby showers this week and before we delve into the gifts, decorations and games that are sure to be included, we are going to have a wee history lesson and see where and how this world wide tradition started!

Welcoming a baby into a family or community is practiced around the world, across many cultures. The coming together, extending one's best wishes and giving baby shower gifts to celebrate a baby's imminent arrival, dates back many thousands of years, so how did it begin? Evidence shows that the earliest celebrations revolving around pregnancy and childbirth date back as far as Ancient Egypt. Ancient Greeks marked the birth of a child with celebratory rituals, including the dedication of gifts, however rituals typically took place **after** the mother gave birth and during these rituals, they also offered gifts and good wishes to different gods and goddesses. In the Middle Ages, the closest thing to a baby shower would have been the baptism, often performed on the same day the baby was born. From the Middle Ages to Modern history it was implied that gifts were given to the expecting woman, including necessities for cooking and food. The Victorian era could be considered the ancestor to modern baby showers, as women would hold tea parties for the new mother after she gave birth.

The baby showers we are more familiar with, began during the baby boom era after World War II. The term "shower" came from the practice of "showering" the mother-to-be with gifts and commodities that could get expensive for the parents. The showers were usually hosted by a close family member or female friend, only women attended, and the mother-to-be opened gifts at the shower in a central, decorated chair. Since then, baby showers have certainly evolved as far as etiquette.

Today it is optional to host showers where all family members can attend and the guest of honour can often include the father-to-be as well (yes!).

Your baby shower gives you an excuse to celebrate your pregnancy with your loved ones. It's also a great chance for a catch up, especially if you've been missing out on the gossip since you started falling asleep before dinner!! Surrounded by your friends and family, you can enjoy feeling pampered and looked after, whilst everyone excitedly chats about your imminent parenthood. Oh, and there will be cake. Lots of cake. And presents! Baby showers come in all shapes and sizes, from an intimate gathering of best friends for afternoon tea, to a large gathering at home. Some baby showers are themed around the baby's gender, and others focus instead on the expectant parents interests or hobbies. There might be games, blessings for the labour and birth and sharing of birthing stories. Someone will no doubt want to share their work colleagues awful birth story they heard the other day! Yeah, it doesn't really make much sense as a thought process, and yet this incredibly rude conversational fail is all too familiar at baby showers. To prevent your celebration turning into a two hour discussion of the worst birth stories imaginable, nip the conversation in the bud by saying you don't want to hear anything negative about birth, or better still, print out a sign to stick on your front door that says, **"No negative birth stories beyond this point"**.

Whatever your baby shower looks like, you can be pretty sure the following things will happen at your baby shower:

You will cry (you just will). Whether it's a surprise baby shower that has you in floods of (happy) tears before you've even walked through the door, or a speech from your best friend that makes you cry, you will definitely need to take some tissues with you, but don't worry, you can totally blame it on your hormones. People will comment on your belly (they shouldn't) You may spend hours getting ready for your baby shower, mostly because it's the closest you've been to a night out in months, style your newly acquired mane to perfection, and put enough make up on to perfect that 'pregnancy glow' you keep hearing about. You may even have a new maternity dress, ready to make the most of your gorgeous baby bump. And after all that effort, the first thing you will hear when you walk through the door is, 'Oh My God, You Are HUGE! - feel free to shoot them the 'death stare'!



There might be a sweepstake of some description. Your friends and family will place bets on the date and time of the birth and maybe the gender, if it's a 'surprise'. Bad advice happens to all expectant parents, someone will corner you at the baby shower and dole out words of 'wisdom'. You will think it all sounds ridiculous and don't be too afraid to say so. It can be well-meaning and depending on who it's coming from, maybe quite useful. When it's time to unwrap the presents, get ready to hear a room of women saying 'aaaaah' at the top of their voices. Every single present will evoke the same reaction, even the breast pads!

I can almost guarantee someone at your baby shower is almost certainly going to advise you to 'take whatever drugs you can get your hands on'. This is not great advice, and adds to the fear that many pregnant women fear when they think about the birth. Your LMC is not a drug dealer, you do not need to give advance warning of your order before the big day. Just see how you feel on the day, and you can decide if you want medical pain relief when you know what labour feels like and how you are coping. There is no need to order up an epidural before you've even cut into that baby shower cake!!

Things will get emotional, yes I mentioned crying before (it's worth mentioning again) but you will cry, your best friend will cry because she can't wait for you to be a mum, your mum will cry because she's going through a midlife crisis at the prospect of becoming a grandmother(YAY!!).

What's a baby shower without a few games, it's almost part of the tradition! There is a vast array of games that may be included such as 'guess the baby food?', guess Mums belly size, who knows Mum and Dad the best? and the well used 'guess the baby' photo competition. Baby shower games can create lots of fun and laughter!

And, last but by no mean least, the all-important food. Hosts may choose to have a buffet or spread to which everyone can contribute. Or if you're having the baby shower at a restaurant or cafe, you can request a budget from the venue itself. Cake must be included in this celebration (what's a celebration without cake?!). There are hundreds of possible cake styles and even more ways to decorate them. People have varying tastes, so you may want to stick to a simple baby shower cake so everyone is happy. Use elements from favorite children's books, favorite colours, theme of the shower and animals all make great decorations. Have fun with your cake and sweet treats and use personal touches to give your guests a special celebration they will remember forever.

At the end of the day, the most important thing is for you and your partner to enjoy the day and to receive lots of love, gifts, and good wishes. After all, your baby will be here in no time, and a baby shower is a wonderful way to spend some time surrounded by loved ones before the big day!

