

“I’M NOT fat I’m pregnant”

Not only is your figure changing weekly, you also have no control over it. Weirder still, you’re now public property, with everyone having a say on your shape. Here, seven women explain how it feels

DEALING WITH YOUR CHANGING BODY



Monica Campo, 29

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

“This is my third pregnancy and I generally love my pregnant body. I feel quite sexy, especially around five to seven months when you have a ‘glow’. Throughout my pregnancy, I have tried to have a positive body image. Pregnancy is the one time when you can expose a large tummy, nice and smooth with no flab! However, at this stage, I’m feeling over it. I no longer fit in any clothes, and I just feel heavy and uncoordinated.”

What does your partner think? “My partner loves my pregnant body and I am much more aroused during pregnancy, so our sex life is great!”

Have other people commented on your changing shape? “It is only during pregnancy that you are confronted with people commenting on your body. It can be quite demoralising, like my body is public property. Strangers and friends say how big my belly is and people often ask if I’m having twins! I try to take it all with a grain of salt.”

What has been your experience with caregivers? “My independent midwife respects my body. She asks if she can examine me and spends time with me as a person, not just a carrier of a foetus. She doesn’t make comments about my belly or weigh me, which is a very different experience from my previous pregnancies in a public clinic. I did have a negative experience during my ultrasound when the ultrasonographer said my ‘body mass’ was making it difficult to see the baby. I thought she was telling me I was fat and that made me upset. I have also had obstetricians in previous pregnancies say my pelvis is too small, so I’m either too small or too fat!”

Any tips? “Love your body and remember the amazing work it’s doing!”

Monica gave birth on xxxxx to xxxxxxx, xxxkg

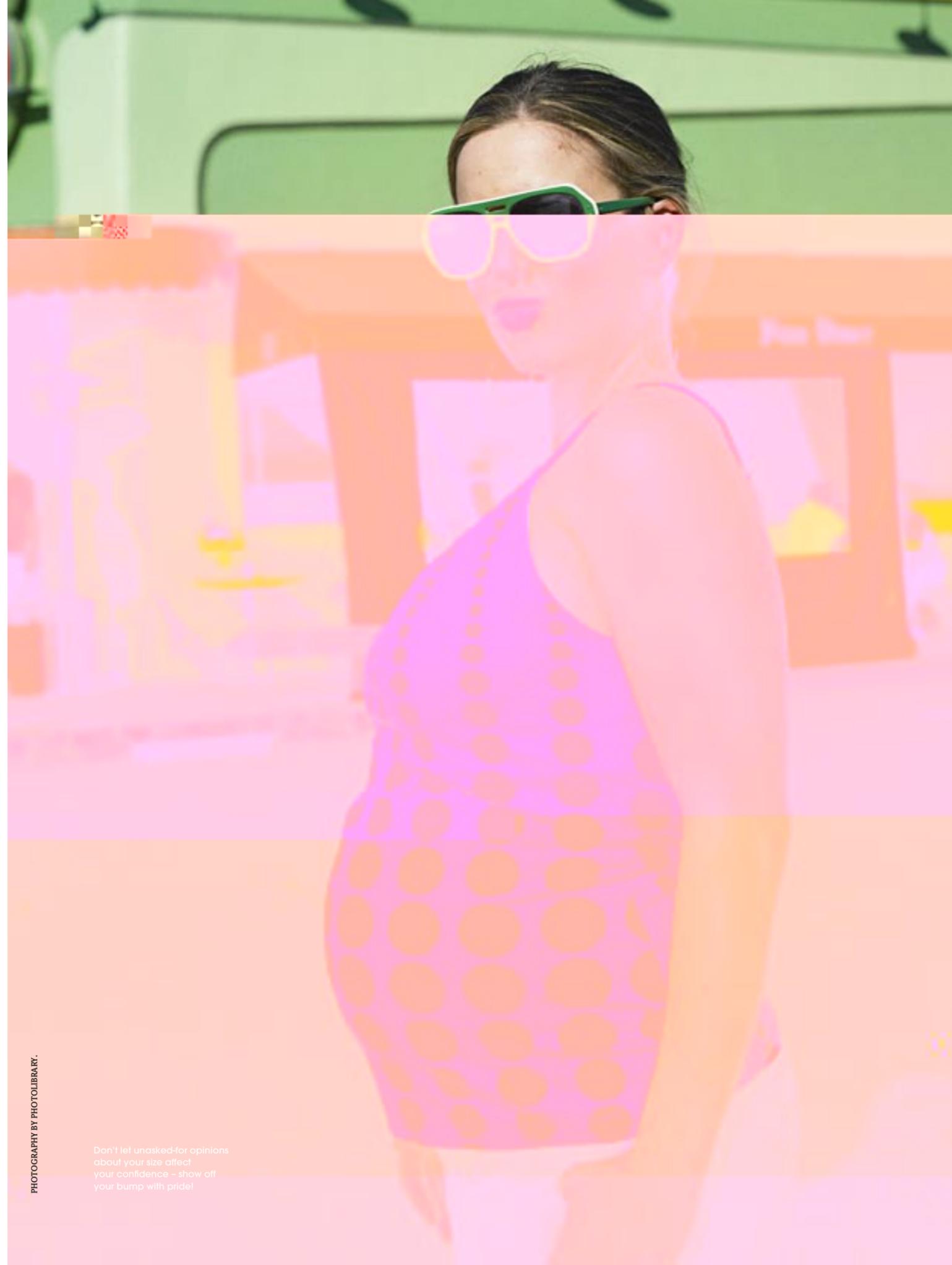


Debra Lee, 32

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

“Some days I feel good and may even forget I’m actually pregnant, and other days I feel heavy and self-conscious about being the ‘biggest’ woman in the room.”

What does your partner think? “My partner is much more accepting of my increasing size than I am. Sometimes if I am worrying whether I will be able to lose the weight and get back ▶



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Don't let unasked-for opinions about your size affect your confidence - show off your bump with pride!

to my previous fitness level, he provides me with positive reassurance and confidence in my ability to regain control of my body.”

Have other people commented on your changing shape? “When you’re pregnant your body is public property and open for comment. I went to a wedding when I was seven months pregnant and over a space of two hours, four people reached over to feel my stomach. A relative visiting from overseas said I didn’t look pregnant, just ‘big’ and a bit ‘fat’. I’ve learnt to be less sensitive to comments. If I wasn’t pregnant, would people still think it was appropriate to comment on my weight gain?”

What has been your experience with caregivers? “I’ve had a very positive experience with my obstetrician. She hasn’t focused on my weight and I haven’t been subjected to routine weigh-ins. On one occasion I was attended by another obstetrician who informed me that I would need to have a late ultrasound as being a ‘bigger’ woman with ‘padding’ around the stomach made it difficult to determine the size and position of the baby. I was a little hurt by those comments.”

“I have always found it strange that people you have never met feel they can touch your belly. I’ve learnt that having my hands on my belly gives a clear ‘hands off’ signal to people.”

How do preg celebs make you feel? “I try not to take too much notice of pregnant women in the media but I must admit, it’s hard to avoid. It can be difficult not to compare yourself to the super-skinny Angelina Jolie, who supposedly only gained five kilograms during her pregnancy, or be envious of the seemingly effortless recovery of celebrity mums such as Michelle Williams. I’ve gained 15 kilograms! It makes us ‘real’ pregnant women wonder how much weight gain is too much and can give us unrealistic expectations of how long it will take to get back to our pre-pregnancy body shape.”

Any tips? “I’ve learnt not to take comments about my body too personally. Keep the bigger picture in mind – your pregnant body is temporary and your round stomach plays a very important and amazing role in nurturing your baby.”

Debra gave birth on 7 August to Aiden Lee Richard Lutz, 3.1kg



Kristen
18
WEEKS
PREGNANT

Kristen Morrison, 38

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

“I feel ordinary or great depending how my clothes are fitting; getting your wardrobe right is half the challenge. As a maternity designer, I think there are a lot of unrealistic styling examples presented in the media. Designers often produce styles which look great on a size 8 and leave everyone else feeling inadequate. You go through this stage where your belly and your bottom aren’t proportion – it’s not really until the belly protrudes past the bottom that you start to look good.”

What does your partner think?

“He loves my pregnant body. I don’t love the increase!”

Has anyone commented on your changing shape?

“It is weird to be on the receiving end of a glance at the belly and then the pause when you can tell someone is wondering if they should say something or not. Several women have said, ‘You’re tiny!’, which makes me laugh because I feel like a heifer! I make a lot more effort getting dressed, whereas before I wouldn’t really think about it. By 18 weeks, I’d put on six kilos.”

How do preg celebs make you feel? “I pay attention to it more because of what I do than if I wasn’t in the maternity industry. If women think celebs lose weight postpartum from breast-feeding alone, they’re fooling themselves. If we all had trainers and dieticians we’d have a better chance of looking like them. If you’re lucky enough to lose the weight straight away you shouldn’t be depressed either. Why should you cover up so you don’t make other women feel inadequate?”

Any tips? “Enjoy being more womanly and try showing off your new cleavage – I love mine!”

Kristen is due to give birth on December 7.



Lisa
28
WEEKS
PREGNANT

Lisa Chalmers, 37

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

“When I’m pregnant, I make more of an effort to feel feminine than I usually do. I always wear make-up and I’m partial to pretty bras, since it’s the only time that I really fill them! With my first child, I was in London standing on the tube and it suddenly hit me that it was obvious to everyone that I’d had sex. I nearly died! I got really embarrassed and had to get off the train. It felt like my body was making a huge announcement to the world. Now with my fourth baby, I love the statement that pregnancy makes.”

What does your partner think? “My husband is fine with my body, but he is still a bit of a stickler, just a different shape! It’s physically harder to be intimate but given this is the fourth baby, we know what works for us.”

Has anyone commented on your changing shape?

“People comment on my body a lot, usually how small I am, even though I don’t feel that way! I’ve learnt that having my hands on my belly gives a clear ‘hands off’ signal to people I think might touch it. I have actually been asked out by men when visibly pregnant. I couldn’t think of anything more bizarre. To me, I’m not sexually attractive and couldn’t be more unavailable. I’m not sure if I should be flattered but I find it repulsive!”

How do preg celebs make you feel? “They make no impression on me at all. When I had my first two children, they ran parallel with Victoria Beckham’s pregnancy, so I was interested in her progress, but that’s truly where the interest ends. I hate the whole celeb thing, the effect it has on them and their bodies and the fact that people feel the need to judge them. I remember when Liz Hurley had her baby and three months later she was on the cover of a magazine. I’d have been far more impressed if she’d been breast-feeding!”

Lisa gave birth to (due Oct 18). ►



Poppy Fay, 25

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

"Pregnancy was quite daunting initially and I was feeling a bit miffed, like, 'Where's my baby bump?' because I wanted to look pregnant. I didn't put on any weight until about six months and then I put on about six kilos in six weeks. The fear of what I would look like afterwards has faded as I now marvel at the way my body can grow another human being."

What does your partner think? "He says my tummy is the cutest thing he's ever seen!"

"One woman asked me how far along I was, then when I told her I was five and a half months, she said, 'You're massive! I wasn't that big.' I told her that everyone's different."

Has anyone commented on your changing shape?

"I've noticed other pregnant women's eyes move from my stomach to my wedding ring finger. I thought maybe we would be beyond that. I've also heard people make comments like, 'It's funny the age people choose to have babies now, they're either too young or too old' with the implication that I'm a teenager! I was shocked."

How do preg celebs make you feel?

"I vaguely know what's been going on with celebs like Katie Holmes and Angelina Jolie. I think about postpartum weight loss and I do feel like average women are expected to lose weight fast when it should be gradual. I've read that it's dangerous to lose weight and exercise straight after the birth."

Poppy gave birth to (due September 3).



Kat Skarbek, 36

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

"I think I've always had a love-hate relationship with my body. I put on a bit of weight before I got pregnant so when I actually became pregnant I didn't feel like I was at my optimum weight. Once I've given birth, I have to lose the baby weight plus the 10 kilos that I gained before. Now that I am pregnant and heavier, I feel OK about my body but I still look at my bottom and think, 'Why doesn't anyone tell you that when you get pregnant your bottom just spreads out?'"

What does your partner think?

"My husband still thinks of me as a sexual being, which is reassuring. He loves me at all shapes and has never made me feel insecure."

Has anyone commented on your changing shape?

"Strangers feel it's OK to tell me how gigantic I am. At first, people just thought I was fat. They wouldn't want to ask me, but when I told them I was pregnant they'd say, 'I just thought you were chubby.' One woman asked me how far along I was, then when I told her I was five and a half months, she said, 'You're massive! I wasn't that big.' I told her that everyone's different. She kept saying, 'But you're huge!'. People have also said that I look like I'm having twins. For a while it got to me, but now I just ignore those comments."

How do preg celebs make you feel?

"I remember how tiny Katie Holmes was before she was pregnant, compared to her huge belly. I found that reassuring. Thank God there are celebs out there who look like they're pregnant and don't look like supermodels. It's important to be realistic about pre- and post-baby weight and not obsess about looking a certain way."

Kat gave birth to (Due Date: 3 October).



Eve Caruana, 31

How do you feel about your pregnant body?

"I've popped out earlier with this pregnancy compared to my first. I just feel like I'm gaining weight too quickly – I've put on 10 kilograms already! You couldn't tell I was pregnant at this stage with my first baby. I only really started to show around five or six months. But this time I'm showing at four months!"

What does your partner think?

"My partner is fine with my pregnant body. He says, 'You're putting on weight' or 'You're getting big' and I'm like, 'I know!' I'm a small person but my body is changing quickly. I'm not strict about my food and I haven't had any cravings. When I'm eating junk food my sister says, 'You should be eating better' but I just say 'I want it!'. If I feel like it, I'll eat it. I know I should do some exercise but it's hard because I'm working full-time."

What has been your experience with caregivers?

"My obstetrician doesn't weigh me at all, which is quite a relief. He just takes measurements. He doesn't comment on the size or shape of my body."

Has anyone commented on your changing shape?

"When I was first pregnant but hadn't shared the news yet, people at work were asking, 'Are you going to tell us?' because they suspected, but I didn't want to say anything until after I had reached 12 weeks."

How do preg celebs make you feel?

"I read about celebrities but it doesn't really bother me. The baby weight will come off and I'll work it off slowly. I didn't have time to lose weight after my first baby so this time I'll have to work a bit harder. Celebrities lose something like 10 kilos in two weeks! It can't happen like that for normal women who don't have a trainer to help them."

Eve is due on January 10, 2007. Meredith Nash **COSMO**