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How to find plus-size maternity wear

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By **Heather Boerner**

Jacqueline Tourville loves fashion. So when she became pregnant, she got excited about all the maternity styles she'd seen in popular magazines. She didn't expect to have a "baby bump" like the size 2 models and actresses who set the trends, but surely she could find clothes that conveyed her style even as her baby grew.

What Tourville ended up finding was that those cute tops and skirts in the magazines don't come in her size.

"After going shopping and seeing what maternity clothes were actually available for plus-size women, I quickly realized I would have to take matters into my own hands if I wanted to survive pregnancy with my sense of style intact," says Tourville, a size 22 and coauthor of *Big, Beautiful, and Pregnant: Expert Advice and Comforting Wisdom for the Expecting Plus-Size Woman*. "Pregnancy brought out the fashion designer in me," she says.

Most pregnant women lament the lack of attractive, affordable plus-size maternity wear. The good news is that more retailers, including Motherhood Maternity and Fashion Bug, are carrying plus-size maternity clothes. The bad news is that most of those clothes don't look anything like the fun, gorgeous, trendy maternity clothes featured in pregnancy magazines.

"Sometimes I've found cute things, but mostly I've given up and wear the same three or four outfits over and over again," says Jennifer Mountain, a real estate contractor in Haslet, Texas, and mom of one.

Mom-of-two Tourville says she was determined to avoid that fate — even if she had to learn some sewing skills to do it. Here she shares some of her secrets for how to create the maternity wardrobe you want.

Wardrobe strategies

A few savvy tactics can turn a bleak-looking fashion outlook into a bevy of possibilities and opportunities.

Embrace the empire. In her pre-pregnancy days, Tourville hated baby doll shirts — shirts with empire waists just below her bustline — because she thought they made her look pregnant. "Now I can't stock my closet with enough of them!" she says. She buys them in a size or two larger than her usual size. Sometime she cinches them just below her bust to really emphasize her growing belly, but usually they work as a fashionable maternity staple all by themselves. Her love of the empire waist style extended to formal wear. Dresses in this style, she explains, are ideal for fancy occasions.

"For the office holiday party [the first time I was pregnant], I found a beautiful black baby doll dress at a thrift store. I sewed a red ribbon right along the empire seam line," she recalls. "The bright color drew lots of attention to my pregnant belly. I still remember all the compliments I got on that outfit. Many plus-size friends have asked to borrow this dress during their own pregnancies."

Get creative. To create a fitted-and-flared look with non-maternity tops, Tourville added mitten clips — those short pieces of elastic that have suspender clips at each end — to the back of the shirts, just below her bra line.

Try boho skirts. You don't have to be a hippie to love a good prairie skirt. These full, elastic-waist skirts, purchased a

size or two larger than your usual size, can last "right up until your due date," says Tourville. She usually paired them with a tank top altered to fit snugly and emphasize her pregnant belly. Add dangly earrings and a funky scarf to complete the bohemian look.

Save for big-ticket items. It's true that the more fashionable the plus-size maternity clothes, the more expensive they are. If you can afford it, save money to have one or two more expensive pieces. If that seems like a stretch, remember that those clothes will pay for themselves with repeated wearings and the joy they bring you. Go for core items that you can mix with other pieces in your wardrobe: a really good pair of black pants, a flowy silk shirt in a solid color, a beautiful poncho or jacket.

Let your mouse do the shopping. Many stores, such as Motherhood Maternity and Fashion Bug, may not carry your size on the racks but have oodles of garments just for you in their online stores. Many web-only stores have clothes made to fit you (see **Where to shop**, below). And don't forget to search eBay, where lots of plus-size maternity wear is available every day.

Enlist friends. If you have plus-size friends, be glad. Arrange to share your more fabulous plus-size maternity wear as each of you gets pregnant. That way, you save money, look great, and bond with your buddies.

Create your own clothes. If you have a creative streak and some free time, supplement your wardrobe with some handmade pieces. You'll find patterns — which you can adapt to any size — as well as information, online sewing classes, and more at websites such as Makematernityclothes.com, Oldpatterns.com, Simplicity.com, and Voguepatterns.com.

Where to shop

Sometimes it just takes trial and error to find something you like. Here are some places to try when filling out your fabulous plus-size maternity wardrobe:

- **BabyBecoming.com:** Clothes up to size 6X for expectant and nursing moms.
- **[Babystyle](http://Babystyle.com):** Shop by size; extra-large is approximately size 16 to 18.
- **[BB Maternity](http://BBMaternity.com):** Fun styles, available at Nordstrom and boutiques across the country.
- **BCOutlet.com:** Deep discounts on Brylane's fashionable plus-size maternity wear, including basics and bras and panties.
- **[Destination Maternity](http://DestinationMaternity.com):** If you're lucky enough to live in a town with this superstore, lots of BabyCenter readers consider it their go-to store. The online outlet offers clothes up to 3X.
- **[Due Maternity](http://DueMaternity.com):** This site has a small but cute plus-size section.
- **[Fashion Bug Plus](http://FashionBugPlus.com):** Maternity clothes up to 3X.
- **[JCPenney](http://JCPenney.com):** The online plus-size maternity shop goes up to 3X.
- **[Lane Bryant Maternity](http://LaneBryantMaternity.com):** Trendy fashions up to size 36W.
- **[Love Your Peaches](http://LoveYourPeaches.com):** Plus-size clothes that work for pregnancy.
- **[Magnificent Moms](http://MagnificentMoms.com):** Maternity wear up to size 30.
- **[Maternity-Clothing-Fashions.com](http://MaternityClothingFashions.com):** A rare treat: plus-size maternity dresses and formal wear up to 3X, for special occasions that pop up during pregnancy.
- **[Maternity Cupboard](http://MaternityCupboard.com):** Canadian plus-size maternity wear shop offers up to size 3X and gives great instructions about fit and care.
- **Maternity4Less.com:** Clothes up to size 26W at deep discounts.
- **[Motherhood Maternity](http://MotherhoodMaternity.com):** Its plus-size section has fun finds.
- **PlusMomMaternity.com:** A clothes clearinghouse for expecting and nursing moms up to size 6X.
- **[Target](http://Target.com):** Well-priced clothes up to size 30W, and Liz Lange maternity wear up to XXL (size 20).

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