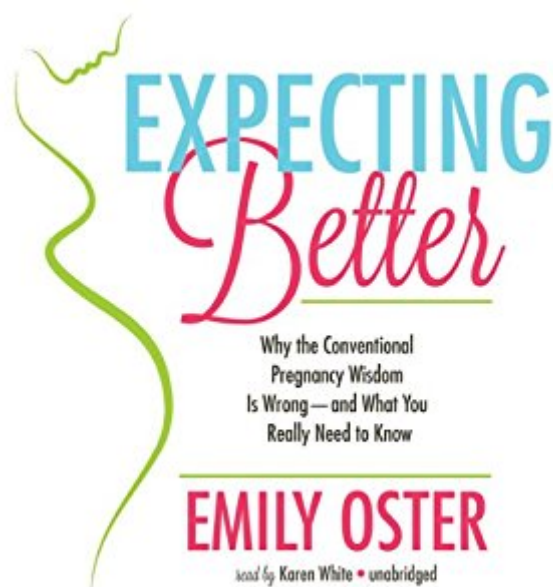


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# Expecting Better: Why Conventional Pregnancy Wisdom Is Wrong - And What You Really Need To Know



## Synopsis

An award-winning social scientist uses the tools of economics to debunk myths about pregnancy and to empower women to make better decisions while they're expecting. Pregnancy is full of rules. Pregnant women are often treated as if they were children, given long lists of items to avoid - alcohol, caffeine, sushi - without any real explanation from their doctors about why. They hear frightening and contradictory myths from friends and pregnancy books about everything from weight gain to sleeping on your back to bed rest. Economist Emily Oster believes there is a better way. In *Expecting Better*, she shows that the information given to pregnant women is sometimes wrong and almost always oversimplified, and she debunks a host of standard recommendations on everything from drinking to fetal testing. When Oster was expecting her first child, she felt powerless to make the right decisions. How doctors think and what patients need are two very different things. So Oster drew on her own experience and went in search of the real facts about pregnancy using an economist's tools. Economics is not just a study of finance. It's the science of determining value and making informed decisions. To make a good decision, you need to understand the information available to you and to know what it means to you as an individual. Take alcohol. We all know that Americans are cautious about drinking during pregnancy. Official recommendations call for abstinence. But Oster argues that the medical research doesn't support this; the vast majority of studies show no impact from an occasional drink. The few studies that do condemn light drinking are deeply flawed, including one in which the light drinkers were also heavy cocaine users. *Expecting Better* overturns standard recommendations for alcohol, caffeine, sushi, bed rest, and induction while putting in context the blanket guidelines for fetal testing, weight gain, risks of pregnancy over the age of 35, nausea, and more. Oster offers the real-world advice one would never get at the doctor's office. The health of your baby is paramount, and with this practical guide readers can know more and worry less. Having the numbers is a tremendous relief - and so is the occasional glass of wine.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As an Engineer dad and PhD mom, we are statistical in mind and control freaks, so we felt this book was speaking to us. After our first audible listen together on a road trip (pre-conception... did I mention we were type A?), we purchased the hard copy for the statistical information and charts. The author (and reader) leads you into the statistical stuff in a conversational way, but then guides you to the more detailed stuff if you wish (either in her book or in actual studies). Once statistical risks are known, it is on you to decide how you feel about those risks - we appreciated this perspective throughout the book. I'm now working my way through it a second time on drives to and from work, hopefully with a lil one on the way.

It is empowering for women to have realistic facts at hand. I suspect because the author has gone to a different set of data than what is collected in the US (again, treating women as if they were able to review information and make informed choices) when it comes to alcohol consumption during pregnancy, she has been targeted by some very anti education folks.

PLEASE do not listen to the AWFUL advice throughout this book! The author badly misrepresents research. This is basically an economist reviewing medical advice by cherry-picking a few studies, poking holes in the design, and then issuing proclamations based on no understanding of the mechanisms, of biology, or of medicine!--just her skepticism of the exceedingly few studies she decided to read. The problem is that her advice is very often to ignore troves of research on things that can be very harmful to your baby, because the author decides, maybe those things aren't true. Here are the main flaws: 1. Finding a study or two and poking holes in them, instead of looking at the overall results of hundreds or thousands of studies on these topics 2. No understanding or discussion of the biological mechanisms in issuing her decisions--simply snarky skepticism about cherry-picked studies and defiance against her doctor, who seems to have been pretty dopey 3. Mothers SHOULD make conservative decisions when it comes to the life, death, suffering and long-term health of their child. If something maybe does and maybe doesn't seriously harm their

child, and refraining doesn't harm the mother in any way, then you refrain!! I don't like being judgmental, but when you're talking about a completely defenseless little fetus or baby, then yes, you do need to protect it and your petty desire for cold cuts, wine or coffee isn't worth harming your child. A lot of her info is WAY off base. If you so much as read normal pregnancy websites that spotlight studies, this should be very clear to you. This book is kind of like having your Mom review your PhD dissertation and telling you what to change. Mom doesn't understand your dissertation and won't be helpful in you making decisions about it. Examples--The author decides it's fine to drink a couple drinks a week, or one or so a day, mainly because she is able to question a couple studies that showed this was bad. However, there is a trove of research that is pretty tight that she doesn't look at, including some very recent research not covered by this book, that is very strong, and shows that you can seriously damage your child's brain in a way that will make that human suffer its entire life. The pertinent point here, is that she couches everything in terms of her definition of economic decisions-making in a very flawed way. She says, you have to take data and weigh the benefits--that you enjoy a couple drinks--against the costs--data that she thinks is rather inconclusive about the potential impacts. And she decides to go ahead and consume some alcohol. But this is NOT how mothers make decisions, nor should they! The costs are Maybe or Maybe Not damaging this fetus irrevocably for its entire future life, weighed against your desire to have wine. Wine is NOT a need! Why would a mother even consider doing something that might seriously harm their fetus, just because it also might not? The same for coffee. She looks at a couple small studies, pokes holes in their design, and decides that it is fine for her to drink multiple cups of coffee per day. This is why you should use an understanding of biology, medicine or physiology--not an understanding of "economics", when making these decisions! The blood and organs of your fetus are not yet developed. The caffeine you drink comes through and into the fetus' body, but it cannot metabolize this the way that you can. Caffeine impacts the little one far more heavily than it impacts you. One cup of coffee to you is like 3 to 4 cups for your fetus. What kind of mother would deliberately put 12 cups of coffee into a baby! How would you feel after 12 cups? Why would you want your baby to suffer, when you could just not do it? There is also recent very strong research that finds a significantly higher rate of miscarriage for women who drink more than 2 cups of coffee per day. Another example showing the same pattern--she discusses the drop in fertility in women with age based on research from 1880. She says this is the main research on the topic. And then disagrees with it. Sorry, but there are entire scientific journals devoted to this topic! There are thousands of studies! She also goes on a diatribe about research stating that Correlation is not Causation, and that doctor's recommendations are based on correlative evidence. Congratulations,

the idea that causation and correlation differ is not new to anyone in a medical profession, nor to probably most people. She then shows a childish understanding of science, talking about how the only way to get away from correlation is to have extensive control groups for every variable studied. Anyone who has done more than freshman year statistics knows that there are many statistical methods that work very well for getting away from correlation and finding causation. You can't always have a control group. When you spend a year or more in the rigorous peer review process before getting your study published in a medical journal, yeah, results not based solely on causation is actually something they require. But thank you miss economist lady for letting us know about that! The author should have just gotten a better doctor who answered her questions with detail and research. My doctor does. This book reads like those people who decide to do really offensive and outlandish things for the reason of defying political correctness. But this isn't about political correctness, this is about your baby. Why would you ever want to risk this little person just to be edgy and snarky? I am really sad that a number of people have thought this is a good book.

This book helped assuage many of my concerns about pregnancy and the "taboos" pregnant women are told to avoid without the data to back it up. The author provides this data and allows us to make our own decisions based on this data. I strongly recommend this book for all expectant moms.

I go this audiobook out of the library. I really like the narrator and the book itself is outstanding. Well written, well researched, empowering and fascinating. A serious must read/ listen for any pregnant woman.

Ms Oster claims to have written this book because she felt patronized by the way the medical providers treated her during her pregnancy. I found her tone and "summation" of the evidence just as patronizing and "dumbed down". As noted in the other review she seriously skims in some areas and in others (advice on drinking alcohol while pregnant) is dead wrong. All in all I'd look elsewhere for a book on pregnancy.

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