

# american baby

HEALTHY PREGNANCY, HAPPY BABY

## TOP TOYS OF 2013

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## the final cut

I loved my family the way it was, but panic set in when my husband wanted a vasectomy. **By Ronnie Koenig**

**B**ack when I was in fourth grade, I was obsessed with choose-your-own-adventure books. My favorite was James Bond-themed and loosely based on the movie *A View to a Kill*. I spent hours flipping the pages, eager to “find my fate.” If I turned to page 47 and fell off a snow-capped mountain, the coveted microchip just out of reach, I’d flip

back a few pages and make a different choice. Somehow, I always made sure the story ended on whatever page had James and me making out in an igloo.

As an adult, I still enjoyed knowing that most times, if I did something that I regretted, I could simply flip back a few “pages” and change course. That is, until two years ago, when I gave birth to our twins—a son and a

daughter—and not long after, my husband suggested that since our family was complete, he would book an appointment for a vasectomy. We had just put the twins in their cribs, and I nearly did a spit-take with a mouthful of sauvignon blanc. It wasn’t the first time Luke had mentioned the idea of getting “fixed”—he’d brought it up even before the twins were born.

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But I had hoped he'd forget about it or at least mull it over for a few years.

Even though I pretty much agreed that we were finished having children, I wasn't ready for such a final decision. More babies for us was a bad idea—I had a dicey delivery that required multiple blood transfusions, and anyway, the idea of kids outnumbering grown-ups just seemed unmanageable. Still, I wanted to keep my options open.

"But you said you don't want to go back on the Pill," my husband reminded me. He was right. By the time we'd started trying to have a baby, I'd been on it for more than 15 years, and with the hormones out of my system, it felt like a veil had been lifted. Of course, there was no scientific evidence that being on the Pill all that time had messed with my fertility (after two years of trying, I finally conceived via IVF), but I still felt better knowing I wasn't putting unnecessary drugs into my system.

We explored other forms of birth control but couldn't find one we were happy with. After my scary C-section, an IUD suddenly seemed too invasive. Condoms were too college dorm. And then there was the diaphragm—an awful, jelly-filled flying saucer of a libido-killer. After using it once, I ended up squatting on the floor of my bathroom in tears. "Go on your computer and Google 'how to remove diaphragm!'" I yelled at Luke through the closed door. Clearly, we needed a better solution.

### Bye-bye, birth control

A vasectomy seemed like the logical choice, and my man was only too eager to sign up. Sure, he was head over heels in love with our 5-month-



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old bundles of joy, but he was also certain that there'd be no more heirs to his throne. It freaked me out that he wanted to take such drastic measures so soon. I never questioned his love for our family, but I did worry that the intensity of the first few months with multiples was affecting his choice. To me, getting a vasectomy seemed like something you should ruminate on for years, not run out and do at the spur of the moment, like getting a Tasmanian Devil tattoo on a night of drinking. Our babies were barely rolling over—what if we changed our minds?

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Secretly, I harbored fantasies of tossing the birth control and "just seeing what happens." It was a way of putting off a difficult decision, under the guise of romance. I knew from experience that science, not fate or a stroke of good fortune, was what had created our children. Luke didn't like the idea of leaving anything in life to chance. He booked a consultation with Dr. Snippy for the following Tuesday.

I accompanied Luke to the appointment, expecting the doctor to tell him about a waiting period and to maybe suggest that he speak to a therapist or consult a rabbi or a Magic Eight Ball about whether this was really the right decision for us. Boy, was I wrong. Instead, Luke and I walked out of the office with a pamphlet featuring a diagram of the male anatomy and a surgery appointment scheduled for the following week.

At home, I scrutinized the literature. It explained the procedure, an outpatient operation done in the office, and asserted that there would be no detriment to

Luke's ability to perform.

"Imagine us on vacation in the Turks and Caicos, not having to use anything," Luke enticed, reminding me of our upcoming trip. To him, a vasectomy equaled sexual freedom. To me, it spelled out the future of a more mature sex life. After all, fertility and youth are inextricably linked. I was sure our love life would become old and stodgy, no longer thrilling. Like in the Cialis commercial, but before getting the prescription.

### Second thoughts

Over the course of the week between the consultation and V day, I went through the seven stages of sterilization. For instance, I was in denial that this was happening. I felt angry that my husband would so adamantly chose to do something I wasn't 100 percent behind. Finally, there was the bargaining.

"If you don't do this, I'll give you sex anytime you want it," I offered.

"You do that anyway," Luke countered. It was true.

But then somehow, the morning of

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the appointment, Luke's alarm didn't go off. He swore to me that he didn't do this on purpose, though I wondered if his subconscious had played a role. Either way, it felt like a stay of execution. That afternoon we sat having lunch, his vas deferens operation suddenly...deferred. "I think part of you doesn't want to go through with it," I conjectured. But in my heart, I knew the truth. Luke needed to have me on board.

"Just let him do it," counseled one of my girlfriends as we strolled around the park, the twins bundled up in their carriers. "You can always reverse it."

Dr. Snippy had told us that if we were to change our minds, there was a procedure in which sperm could be aspirated from Luke's testicle. But that seemed about as likely to happen as, well, a guy getting sperm aspirated from his testicle. I knew that if he went through with it, there would be no going back. Even though I still wasn't thrilled with the idea, Luke rebooked his appointment. Deep down, I probably recognized that this was the right decision for us. Still, that didn't stop me from reminding him frequently that he "didn't have to go through with this" and, on the way to the appointment, that we could "turn this car around right now."

### Two and done?

The night before the (rescheduled) appointment, I sat on the couch watching an episode of *Tori & Dean*. Something about their big brood struck me as intensely romantic. It was like they couldn't help but make more babies—the ultimate expression of their love. Having the twins had further strengthened our already strong relationship. Even though the

prospect of raising two babies at once was initially intimidating, it showed us that we were capable—and that was a testament to our bond. I looked in on my sleeping twins and marveled at the fact that they were actually here, actually mine. The truth was, I never thought I'd like being a mom so much. It was going by so fast, and each moment felt fleeting. My daughter's chubby thighs were starting to slim; my son's bald head was sprouting like a Chia Pet. Babyhood was already slipping through my fingers.

During the procedure, I sat in the waiting room, playing with the twins, and reminded myself that we were complete. I knew that I would never

put my family through another potentially risky pregnancy. We had a matched set of mini-me's. What more could we ask for? The twins were our hearts.

"You're sterile,"

Dr. Snippy declared three months post-surgery. Luke's

recovery had been painful, and we were glad to hear he hadn't suffered in vain. In fact, as soon as Luke got snipped, I stopped stressing about it, probably because I had known all along that we weren't planning to have more kids. It dawned on me that I hadn't been mourning the loss of future family members; I'd been lamenting over closing off options. It was a little hard to admit to Luke that, after all my drama, he'd made the right choice for us. And as it is, I wish I had more time for each of them, Luke included.

Now that the twins are toddlers, people have started asking if I'll have another. "Not with him, anyway," I joke. But the truth is, I don't need a James Bond plot twist anymore. My pages have been flipped, and I'm okay with it. Our igloo is filled to capacity, and it's pretty darn cozy in here. ●

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