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In your wildest dreams

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When Chicago mom-to-be Laura Merkin found herself dreaming about her breasts producing chocolate milk and later, giving birth to a dragon, she began to wonder if something was the matter—with her or her baby. It's not unusual for other pregnant women to tell similarly curious tales. In fact, you can rest easy knowing these peculiar misadventures in dreamland are quite common among the expectant crowd. But what's fueling the fantastical fire?

"Pregnancy is a scary, thrilling and emotional time, and our dreams reflect all the thoughts and fears we go through but may not always express," says Lauri Quinn Loewenberg, certified dream analyst and author of *Dream On It: Unlock Your Dreams, Change Your Life* (lauriloenberg.com). "They also help us to prepare as we slowly move into the mommy mind-set."

It might be easy to brush them off as a side effect of your late-night pizza, but many experts believe there's a lot to be learned from what happens while we snooze. "I encourage anyone who is curious about their dreams to write them down in as much detail as they can remember," says Mary Catherine Hamelin, certified doula and lactation counselor in the Tampa Bay area of Florida. "Sometimes just seeing it or feeling it retold can trigger emotions that can be the key to what the brain is working on while we're asleep."

Furthermore, dreams might be a subconscious way of pushing ourselves to take action. "If anxiety or uncertainty is an issue, pregnancy education and mentoring through an in-depth childbirth program and hiring an experienced doula for informational and emotional support could be a good way to address these needs," says Hamelin. "The more evidence-based knowledge a family has during pregnancy, the more confident they'll feel in the process." So what are your

dreams telling you? Let's find out.

Giving birth to a litter

What it means: This dream is particularly typical among novice mamas. "The litter represents the multiple concerns we have with a first-time pregnancy. It's overwhelming and [there are] so many unknowns," says Loewenberg. It could also be that the first (or perhaps only) live birth you've witnessed was a childhood pet welcoming a litter of kittens or puppies. Don't worry about actually delivering animals, though —it's just your brain filling in the blanks with a familiar experience.

Breastfeeding an animal

What it means: The notion of raising a baby, as most moms-to-be know, can bring up a lot of anxiety. "To dream of something fantastical or terrifying is a way of exploring that seemingly vast array of possibilities with the subconscious. We want so much to do things right, and so these dreams can be either a reflection of that anxiety or just a very bizarre journey through the land of what-ifs," says Hamelin. There are a lot of unknowns about motherhood, but one thing you can know for certain: There's not a dragon in your belly.

Having a see-through belly

What it means: At this point, you might know the sex of your baby-to-be. You can feel him moving inside you. Maybe you've even picked out a name. But there's a whole lot more about your baby that you won't know until he's in arms: like whether he'll have your curly hair or hubby's big blue eyes. That desire to see your little one is what prompts this seemingly strange dream. You're impatiently waiting to meet him, so as your waking imagination goes wild, your dreams follow, says Loewenberg.

Teeth falling out

What it means: "This indicates a loss of power," says Velva Lee Heraty, MSW, a psychotherapist and author of [The Dream Belongs to the Dreamer: A Hands-On, How-To, Step-by-Step Guide to Understanding Your Dreams](#). This frequent nightmare isn't reserved for pregnant women, but it might rear its head now because there are many

parts of carrying and birthing a baby that are out of a mom-to-be's control. Your body has become something very different from what you're used to, so it only makes sense that you'd feel a hint of helplessness or powerlessness in face of this new life living within you.

Graphic sex dreams

What it means: "Sex dreams become pretty persistent in the second trimester due to hormones and the fact that we no longer vomit at the smell of hubby's cologne," says Loewenberg. The influx of hormones leaves most women feeling frisky, and now that the first-trimester woes have disappeared, you (and your partner) can embrace that new, curvy body.

Falling through ice

What it means: "This usually means a loss of security. You're feeling uncertain and vulnerable," says Heraty. You're not the only one to feel this way. Becoming a parent, nurturing a tiny newborn, adjusting your relationship with your partner ... baby's arrival is a time of monumental transitions. Your life will look different after you become a mom, but there will be plenty of good to outweigh any bad.

Forgetting or losing the baby

What it means: This anxiety-inducing dream runs rampant among pregnant women. It's reality settling in: Holy moly, I have to be totally responsible for an entire other human being soon! "With that comes all sorts of waking life fears that continue to play out in our dreams," explains Loewenberg. What if I go to the grocery store and forget to put the baby in the car with me? We're so used to being accountable for only ourselves that the thought of adding another responsibility is a natural cause for concern.

Getting into fights

What it means: These dreams tend to occur in the last trimester. Strong pregnancy hormones, an achy back, feeling uncomfortable, perhaps arguing with your spouse ... all of these things manifest themselves in your dreams. "We tend to get angrier about things that normally wouldn't bother us [when we're] not an emotional,

uncomfortable mess. These dreams let us blow off steam and safely express our anger in our heads at night,” says Loewenberg.

Death

What it means: While many women are concerned when they dream of death, Loewenberg stresses that these dreams are really about change—letting go of the past so that we can embrace what is to come. “Dreaming of our own death is the way our subconscious mind helps us to let go of our old self, so we can more readily embrace our new life as mom,” she explains. “Dreaming of others’ deaths is also symbolic of changes and endings happening with yourself and with the person you may be dreaming about.” Relationships change, habits change, old routines die off ... it’s a whirlwind. But no matter when in your life you have a death dream, recognizing that the dream is really about transition makes it far less terrifying and much more comprehensible.

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