

28 great family getaways

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\$2.50



"We're having a

Why more couples want to know
the sex of their unborn baby.

BY CAREN OSTEN GERSZBERG

By the time she was 20 weeks pregnant, Bonnie Judkins, of Norwalk, Connecticut, was tired of beginning sentences with "If it's a boy . . ." or "If it's a girl . . ." She and her husband just wanted to *know*—so at her routine sonogram they told the technician they were ready to find out. They were delighted to hear that they were having a son, and Bonnie has no regrets about finding out in advance. "It gave me 20 weeks to dream about my baby boy," she says. Apparently the Judkinses are not the only ones with inquiring minds. In a poll taken of 500 *Parents* readers, almost

half wanted to know the sex of their unborn baby. So does this mean that the traditional delivery-room declaration—"It's a . . .!"—is becoming passé?

It's definitely less common. Today almost all insurance companies cover ultrasound screening, so most women have one at some time during their pregnancy. When they do, more and more of them are asking to be told the sex of their baby. "In the past 10 or 15 years, ultrasound technology has become more available and more reliable than it used to be," explains Molly Walker, a nurse-midwife who practices in the division of maternal-fetal medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "Among our patients, 99 percent will have an ultrasound at some point, and many choose to find out the sex." Ultrasound can reveal a fetus's sex at about 16 weeks, if the baby is in a good position; other tests that can determine the sex of a baby are amniocentesis and CVS, or chorionic villus sampling, which produce fetal chromosome (and sex) information as early as 14 and 9 weeks, respectively.

Why do parents want to know?

For many, the reason is a practical one: It's easier to plan—and to shop. Deciding on names, wallpaper patterns, and baby-shower themes



MICHAEL MAZZEO, QUILT AND PILLOWS BY THE GAP

boy

is much easier with half as many to choose from. Paula Bennett, of Dayton, Ohio, was able to stock up on girls' diapers and receive adorable baby dresses once she knew she was having a daughter. Many second-time parents who didn't find out the first time do so for the second; they've experienced the surprise and now they want to go the practical route. Retail sales are beginning to reflect the trend too. Bryan Mathias, buyer of newborn clothing for Saks Fifth Avenue stores nationwide, reports a decrease in sales of neutral-color infant clothing, such as mint green.

A strong desire for a certain gender is another good reason to find out the baby's sex. Many parents have a preference: In a study coauthored by Walker, 81 percent of the 243 pregnant women she interviewed wanted a child of one sex more than the other. "Learning the baby's sex during pregnancy can help the mother become more accepting of the gender if it's not her first choice," says Miriam Rosenthal, M.D., director of behavioral medicine in obstetrics and gynecology at University MacDonalld Women's Hospital, in Cleveland. The emotional preparation can make for an easier transition once the baby arrives.

For other couples, knowing the baby's sex helps them attach an identity to it as early as possible. "I felt it was impersonal for us to call the baby

When they know their baby's sex, parents can do their decorating (and dreaming) in advance.



