The past three months of having Thomas John around have been the most exhausting, yet most rewarding days of our lives. Before him, we didn't know what it was like to sleep a total of three hours, interrupted at that, and function pretty darn well during the day. We're avatars, I think.

Prior to his arrival, I thought I had read every page of the Internet — including the ACSH website of course — on what to expect during the newborn stage. Ask me anything about breastfeeding, poop colors, and milestones, I dare you. But there are a few things on which I missed the memo. Candidly, these are things we never thought would pertain to our "sweet little unborn baby," and boy, were we wrong. Here's what I've since learned.

**Colic Happens**

Sure, I had heard about colic [1], but this wasn't going to happen to our child. After all, both my husband and I had been told that we were "good babies."

Baby Colic is best defined as bouts of crying that last more than three hours in a day (usually the same time of day), happen three or more days during the week, for three (or more) weeks in an otherwise healthy child. The baby is typically inconsolable, even after he or she is well-rested, has been fed, and has a clean diaper.

I didn't have to read this definition online to tell you what it is. Around the 4th week of our baby's life, he began to fuss and cry each evening, with the episodes getting longer and louder. To say that it stressed us out would be an understatement. What's worse, there is no clear cause for colic; it comes in like a lion and goes out like one too, and the best research on the cause suggests an imbalance of baby's gut bacteria, which is why many doctors will suggest probiotic drops (and/or lots and lots of yogurt for mom if breastfeeding) to improve baby's digestion.

That made sense. Our baby is out-of-this-world gassy, and no doubt that played a big role in his
fussiness. To relieve his symptoms, we would massage his tummy, do bicycle legs, carry him in the football hold, and rock him, to name a few things. All of that brought temporary relief, until one evening, he stopped. His colic never came back. My husband and I filed this newborn phase in the 'I Don't Understand' cabinet of our brains, and moved on.

Flat Head Syndrome Happens

In 1994, The American Academy of Pediatrics launched the Back to Sleep [2] campaign to encourage parents to place babies on their back for sleep. The benefits of this are well-documented; the position greatly reduces the risk of SIDS in babies six months and younger. At six months of age, the risk of SIDS drops significantly. We have covered this topic extensively [3]. I knew this, and have practiced safe sleeping with our baby since the day he was born.

What I didn't know is that this guideline comes with its own set of challenges, not the least of which is a head that's usually turned to a preferred side of baby's soft, still-forming skull. After all, I was concerned about other things while he slept like, is he breathing? Moms, you know what I'm talking about.

Because newborns spend a lot of time sleeping and thus spend a lot of time on their backs, they may develop a flat spot on the back of the head. This is called positional plagiocephaly, and there are several types, depending on the shape of the baby's head.

After some reading and consulting with our pediatrician, I learned that babies tend to favor turning their heads to one side, which is why it's important for parents to make sure they are repositioning their infant's head every so often, like putting them to sleep on a different side of the crib or bassinet each time, and getting serious about tummy time. **Add this to the list of other things parents should and should not do — you'll run out of pages in five minutes.** See different types of flat head syndrome [4]. If by 4 months of age, the baby's head hasn't improved or the flatness is severe, a pediatrician may recommend using a corrective helmet. **Make no mistake; placing baby on his back to sleep is non-negotiable.** Our son has only a very mild flat spot on the back of his head, so we are making sure he gets plenty of tummy time when awake; we can certainly live with that.

Having a newborn is like going to class and learning something new every day. These issues are just that: issues that go away with time. We are blessed to have a happy, healthy boy that keeps us on our toes daily!