

How to survive a home renovation with a baby on the way

Renovating while expecting: canny timing or a serious case of total insanity? Understand the pros and cons and then decide if is this the right move for you.

It's all in the timing

Your timeline is crucial – both of them. What's the deadline for delivery of your reno and what's your other delivery date?

Before you choose your reno dates, take into account what you'll need to work around. For instance, it's easier to live without a kitchen in summer – think salads, barbecues and picnics – but you may need to be more flexible as tradies often take summer holidays.

Also consider the climate where you live. Renovating through the rainy months is hard enough, especially if you're in the southern states or a tropical wet season, but being pregnant during winter in a house with no heating could push you to breaking point.

Don't try to do everything at once. Think about which tasks can wait until you have the time and energy for them. For some mothers-to-be, especially those who have been working full time, the last few weeks of pregnancy (which might be the first few weeks of maternity leave) could present a good window of time to choose lighting, door handles, tiles and so on.

Now or never?

You might be keen to have everything perfect before the big day, but it's important to take a wider view. Work doesn't have to stop when the baby arrives. Living in the state of mild (or major) chaos that renovating imposes is probably still easier with a brand new bub than with a curious, mobile toddler.

Instead of rushing things, you could plan to get the job finished before the baby is six months old. Just think about the work in a logical order. For a big reno, it might be wise to tackle the kitchen first – it's the biggest and messiest job, and probably easier to manage while you're still pregnant, or when bub is sleeping lots (hopefully!) and not yet on solids.

Plan for downtime

Renovations can be hectic, even more so if they're happening while your family is growing. It's important to plan for some downtime, so you're not on the go 24/7. Here are some tips that may assist:

- be organised - make a list of everything you want to source, supply or choose yourself

(whether it's for the house or the little one!), and create a realistic schedule for when you can do it;

- preserve one livable area in your home where you can retreat, relax and escape from dust, mess and builders; and
- have a bolthole for when it gets too messy, too loud or simply too much. Parents, friends, whoever – arrange a haven you can run to. It can be a sanity (and relationship) saver.

Of course, if you can hand your renovation over and rent elsewhere while the work is happening, that's much easier. Just ensure you have a super-organised builder with their own tradespeople, so you're not left juggling plumbers and sparkies from afar.

Keep safe

If you're staying at home for the duration, or going the DIY route, take care that you don't do anything to put your baby at risk. Here are some things to consider:

- be wary of prolonged exposure to paint fumes, and be sure to avoid lead-based paint;
- avoid thinners, varnishes, lacquer and any kind of spraying
- mould can be dangerous to foetal development – if you come across any, leave the area and call an expert.

How will you cope?

Some families live through a baby/reno combo without any issues, others would never recommend it. Ultimately, it comes down to how you'll cope with the situation. How do you deal with stress? What's your tolerance for chaos, mess and having strange loud people in your personal space?

While pregnancy and a new baby are certainly exciting, it's rarely plain sailing, so some resilience will certainly come in handy.

For expecting parents with a renovation project, lots can come down to attitude and focus. If you can endure short-term discomfort by focusing on longer-term gain, you'll come out the other side with a fantastic new pad *and* a gorgeous baby. Then your new life can really begin.