

Belly
beautiful



NATHALIE ATKINSON

In the world of maternity clothes, there are luxe labels Liz Lange and Cadeau (where tops start at around \$160), Old Navy Maternity, and not much in between. Luckily, a few Canadian maternity lines are finding fashionable middle ground.

Yummy Mummy's easy shirred dresses, capris, circle skirts and ingenious tops — nursing versions have zip cut-outs — are an affordable \$80 for separates to \$200 for dresses (at **Lilith**, 541 Queen St. W, 416-504-5353; yummymummy.net; and **Elegant Expectations**, 2 Toronto St.). YM's stretch lace party dress in blue or cream is perfect for summer weddings, while a stretch terry tube dress in green (\$120) is just plain cool.

Minnow Maternity, another Canadian label, offers an array of tunics, printed separates and on-trend urban army jackets for spring (\$75-\$135, at **Rhonda Maternity**, 100 Cumberland St. and other boutiques; see minnow.ca).

Even downtown designer **Anne Hung**, who's expecting, has modified her popular jallbird-stripe jersey tunics and basic black pants to accommodate growing bellies for less than \$100 (\$29 Queen St. W, 416-964-7251).

"The reality of modern times is that most women work when they're pregnant," says Eva Salem, of uptown boutique **Belly Maternity** (615 Mount Pleasant Rd., 416-440-1734, bellymaternity.ca). This week, between *de rigueur* designer labels like Bella Dahl, Cadeau and Nom, Belly's private label hits the racks — a collection of mid-range basic tops (funky or for work, between \$80-\$120) to fill the price and quality gap.

The core of Belly's private label is a business suiting staple: tailored stretch poplin shirts (\$110) in solid fabrics and crisp pin-stripes more affordable than their designer counterparts. "They're for underneath blazers, with dress pants, for investment bankers and other professionals," says Salem, "but the shirts are still cute with a pair of cropped khakis."

Belly's collection is rounded out with soft stretch jersey microfibre in solid pink, black, white, fresh green and turquoise, with ruching details or cowl necks (about \$85-\$95). All are designed to be worn early on and look neat — "so it doesn't look like you're wearing your husband's clothes!" says Salem — but with stretch to make it through that very last month.

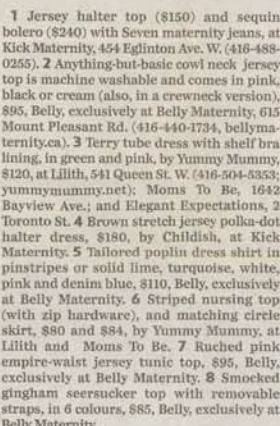
"The average woman wants 'mat' clothes to be more versatile and basic, in colours and styles that are timeless, [so they can be worn] for the second or third baby." These are considerations that women don't have when they're not pregnant. At the same time, adds Salem, "Often, your fashion pieces you only wear for a season or two anyway, but when you're not pregnant you don't feel as guilty about it, inexplicably!" Hence, the more fun pieces, like Belly's smocked seersucker top in coral, aqua, sorbet or blue gingham — "a tribute to my childhood," laughs Salem, "from Grade 7 with Jordache jeans."

And when the time finally comes to trade that funky *au courant* purse in for a single diaper bag that's both stylish and

RETAIL THERAPY

Coming Attractions

You've come a long way, baby. Today, maternity wear rocks and yummy mummies are the coolest kids in town



1 Jersey halter top (\$150) and sequin bolero (\$240) with Seven maternity jeans, at Kick Maternity, 454 Eglinton Ave. W. (416-488-0255). 2 Anything-but-basic cowl neck jersey top is machine washable and comes in pink, black or cream (also, in a crewneck version), \$95, Belly, exclusively at Belly Maternity, 615 Mount Pleasant Rd. (416-440-1734, bellymaternity.ca). 3 Terry tube dress with shelf bra lining, in green and pink, by Yummy Mummy, \$120, at Lilith, 541 Queen St. W. (416-504-5353; yummymummy.net); Moms To Be, 1642 Bayview Ave.; and Elegant Expectations, 2 Toronto St. 4 Brown stretch jersey polka-dot halter dress, \$180, by Childish, at Kick Maternity. 5 Tailored poplin dress shirt in pin-stripes or solid lime, turquoise, white, pink and denim blue, \$110, Belly, exclusively at Belly Maternity. 6 Striped nursing top (with zip hardware), and matching circle skirt, \$80 and \$84, by Yummy Mummy, at Lilith and Moms To Be. 7 Ruched pink empire-waist jersey tunic top, \$95, Belly, exclusively at Belly Maternity. 8 Smocked gingham seersucker top with removable straps, in 6 colours, \$85, Belly, exclusively at Belly Maternity.