

The new shape of maternity fashion

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Forget striped moo-moos and floral pinafores, maternity clothes have taken on a whole new shape.

These days, mamas-to-be are ditching those polyester tents for stylish, little figure-hugging numbers that boast the bump.

Rhonda Flomen, owner of Rhonda Maternity, has definitely noticed the shift during her 33 years in Yorkville.

"When I was pregnant the clothes were a lot looser, but that was the style then," she says. "Now they are a lot more fitted and sexy. But fashion in general is that much more revealing."

And women have become far more body conscious — they want to look svelte, even during pregnancy, she says.

"My generation didn't worry about that as much. We were a lot more accepting of the body's natural change."

But back then it was also morally unacceptable to show off your growing belly.

"When you were pregnant, you certainly didn't flaunt it," says Flomen.

Well times have changed. Think cargo pants that hang low around a bursting belly or slinky, velvet dresses that cling to a woman's every buxom curve. The clothes don't disguise the bump — they make it look bigger and more beautiful than ever.

Just ask Maihyet Burton, the creative talent behind the playful, girly maternity line, Yummy Mummy.

"We want women to feel great about their curves," she says. "It's the one time in your life when you should be able to bust out and feel comfortable with it."

Burton and her partner Jill Stewart have been designing maternity wear for about four or five years now. The collection is available at Burton's downtown store, Liliith. And this season, the duo has gone for feminine blazers in velvet and cord. They've also designed a fabulous all-in-one yoga suit. The clothes are all made from stretchy, high-end fabrics and cling to the body's natural curves.

"Our designs are sexy and they show off the belly," says Burton. "But they're also forgiving. We accentuate the areas women like, and then try and de-accentuate the areas they have issues with."

Another great little boutique for fashion-forward maternity-wear is Belly Maternity in midtown Toronto.

When Eva Salem, who was living in the U.S. at the time, decided to open the store,



HOT MAMAS: Thanks to talents like New York's Liz Lang and Toronto-based designers Maihyet Burton and Jill Stewart, moms-to-be need not look frumpy. The figure-hugging fashions boast the belly more than ever. Above, a crushed velvet dress from Burton and Stewart's maternity line, Yummy Mummy. Right, a sexy, stylish ensemble from Liz Lang's winter collection.

she knew she was cornering a market that was ready to burst.

"In New York, being pregnant isn't an excuse to look frumpy," she says. "They look fabulous at nine months. So when I came to Toronto I wanted to give women here access to that."

Pregnant women, she says, want value and variety, and although it isn't that long a time period, they do have to wear the same clothes again and again.

Belly Maternity features a wide array of labels from Liz Lang to Diane Von Furstenberg. The store also carries the wonderfully cut Earl and Seven maternity jeans.

"Women didn't have the options they do now. They used to buy clothes that were triple their size and just wait to grow into them."

The pieces Salem carries allow women to

look tailored throughout their entire pregnancy. Tops made from a stretchy fabric, for instance, adhere to the body when it's small and stretch as it expands. With the exception of jeans, the old panels on pants have been replaced with elastic or buttons so you can cinch them up when you're small and then let them out as you get larger.

"A lot more thought goes into the design," she says. "It used to be that the people who couldn't hack it in fashion did maternity. But now there are so many fun, exciting maternity designers around."

Not to mention trendsetters like Marc Jacobs and Diane von Furstenberg who have been stitching their coveted labels into maternity wear and doing wonders to banish that frumpy stereotype. Cynthia Nixon's character on *Sex and the City*, for example, wore Liz Lang's creations during her TV pregnancy, proving that working moms-to-be can look red-hot.

The expectations and demands placed on women are far greater now than in the past, and women in turn are demanding more, says Salem.

"It used to be that women didn't have to worry about wearing a different outfit every day because they didn't work and generally stayed home," says Salem. "They had two or three pieces max."

Whereas now, women and their bellies are darting from boardrooms to martini bars and they need clothes that fit that lifestyle.

"If I was at home, it wouldn't have mattered," says Petek Tino, who recently gave birth to a baby girl. "But I worked every day in a corporate environment and so I had to dress accordingly."

And with a few select pieces, combined with a little flair and creativity, she managed to maintain her style throughout her pregnancy.

"I was quite cautious of spending money because I was growing so fast, especially after the fifth month," she says. "So I bought some essential pieces and then added my own touch."

