

# Sweet, Sweet MUSIC

Alternative rocker Alanis Morissette is feeling about as far removed from the angst love songs that first propelled her to international fame in 1995 as a formerly lovelorn musician can possibly get.

First, she's happy married. She tied the knot last May to rapper Mario "MC Souleye" Treadway in a quiet ceremony in their Brentwood, Calif., home. Second, she's pregnant. *Very* pregnant. Her baby boy is due to arrive any day now (as of press time). And it's written all over her face: The woman is totally blissed out.

"There are so many reasons for the bliss," she tells WebMD. "Not the least of which is the hormonal blasting of miracle juice that's going on with the pregnancy alone!" She laughs. "But also, the lifestyle change has been revelatory for me. I've always been a workaholic. During the first trimester, and definitely in the third..." She trails off, reflecting briefly before finishing her thought: "If I were to continue to work on the ton of projects I'm doing and log that many hours a day...I just couldn't do it."

Morissette, 36, is the proud recipient of seven Grammy awards and 12 Juno awards—her latest Juno came in 2009 for her most recent album, *Flavors of Entanglement*—and has set more than her share of records on the Billboard charts. She's also the emotionally edgy voice behind the world's No. 1-selling debut album overall by a female musician: Her smash opus for the brokenhearted, *Jagged Little Pill*, has sold more than 30 million copies.

She's prolific in other ways, too. Cable fans know Morissette as a regular on

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Photographed for WebMD  
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HBO, Showtime, and FX networks, putting in guest acting appearances on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Sex and the City*, plus making regular work of *Weeds*. She's also appeared on *Nip/Tuck* and has done a stint in two off-Broadway plays. If this weren't enough, she's in the process of writing a book she describes as an eclectic mix of "photographs, travelogue, essays, philosophy." And she's doing all this while working on her next album, naturally.

"I was a bit of a train wreck at the beginning," she admits, referring to the first trimester of her pregnancy. "[But] I look back on it now and I'm grateful. ... Even though it was physically challenging, it's been a 'get out of jail free' card for me from the workaholic lifestyle. ... It's allowed me to slow down for the first time in my life. I wouldn't slow down in the past without some pointed reason. My own well-being wasn't reason enough."

Rock icon **Alanis Morissette** is singing a new song these days. She's recently married, very pregnant, and can't wipe the smile off her face—even while battling morning sickness and sleepless nights

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In other words the self-avowed “night owl”—whose long-held approach to creativity was to stay up until 4 a.m. to get the lyrics written, new tracks laid down, lines memorized, or paragraphs finessed—hit a physical wall.

“I realized my timeline is not necessarily the baby’s timeline,” she says. “I envisioned the book being done before the baby came. I’m still writing every day but not late at night, like I once did. I have to be OK with finishing the book sometime next year.”

### Surviving Morning Sickness

Like so many women, Morissette battled nausea during her first trimester.

“It was hard,” she says now, clearly relieved to be past it. “But it helps that it’s so purposeful. I’m not exhausted and nauseated because I have food poisoning; I’m exhausted and nauseated because I’m growing a human being inside my body! A level of humility, reverence, and surren-

der is required.”

Ari Brown, MD, pediatrician and co-author of *Expecting 411: Clear Answers & Smart Advice for Your Pregnancy*, says, “Morning sickness is a myth. It’s all-day sickness for most women who experience it. The good news is, as long as there isn’t excessive vomiting, even women who feel awful—and who are not gaining much weight during the first trimester—tend to feel better, eat better, and gain weight during the second and third, when it’s so essential to get proper nutrition and put on anywhere from one to two pounds per week. Besides,” Brown adds, “experiencing ‘morning sickness’ is a positive sign of a healthy pregnancy. It usually means there are adequate hormone levels in the body.”

“I’d heard a lot of the tricks,” muses Morissette on the subject. “You know, eating and drinking ginger. And I ate smaller, lighter meals. But really the greatest muscle I developed is not resisting.

she’s relieved to have come to terms with her “many addictions,” as she calls them, before conceiving.

“I look at my body in a different way now,” she tells WebMD. “For so long it’s been this athletic, mostly ornamental organism. Now it’s this purposeful, miraculous baby maker. A complete reframing of what my body is here for. Food, too, has taken on a different meaning. I became more high-nutrient oriented a good two years before I got pregnant, so the timing [of the pregnancy] was fortuitous for me.”

In addition to low-impact exercise such as hiking and “doing the elliptical,” Morissette, who ran two marathons and several shorter triathlons before getting pregnant, continued her regular jogging routine during her first trimester. “It just changed naturally,” she says of finally swapping her sneakers for a yoga mat somewhere in the third or fourth month. “My yoga practice has been so important. The bigger my belly gets, the more strain in my back, the tighter my hips get—yoga is a godsend for me right now.”

Pursuing fitness in all its forms also allows Morissette to get out of her head, she says, and not “obsess about all-things-pregnancy all the time, which can leave me feeling sort of nuts.”

### Third Trimester Insomnia

Getting enough sleep, however, is still a problem for Morissette, who has battled bouts of insomnia in the past. Ironically, just as the singer announces she’s finally able to slow down, her body has kicked into full, third-trimester throttle.

She retires early—a rarity before—and maintains a regular bedtime. Plus, she eats some fruit and protein an hour or so before bed, which has been shown to aid sleep. Despite these efforts, she is still regularly up in the middle of the night with surges of wakeful energy.

Brown explains: “Pregnancy is a prelude for parenthood. Insomnia at the end of the pregnancy is really common and may actually serve as segue to having your newborn home with you.”

Having a newborn at home means trading eight hours of uninterrupted

# Alanis Morissette’s Trimester Tips



## FIRST TRIMESTER

**Go with the flow and surrender to the experience.**

“I really wanted to eat in a balanced way during those early weeks, but all I could handle was a whole lot of carbs,” Morissette laughs. “Thankfully, the nausea let up somewhere around the third or fourth month and I was able to eat fruit, too. But then *all* I wanted was fruit. Salads and greens came later.”



## SECOND TRIMESTER

**Do what feels right for you and your partner.**

As an “older mother,” at age 36, Morissette falls into a higher-risk category for potential genetic defects. The singer and her husband faced the choice of several invasive procedures early into the second trimester, including amniocentesis, but they didn’t have any of them. Amniocentesis detects chromosomal abnormalities, something found more commonly in pregnancies in women over 35, and is performed between the 15th and 18th weeks of pregnancy by inserting a needle into the amniotic sac surrounding a developing fetus to draw fluid for testing. “I completely understand any woman’s need to know, or *not* to know,” says Morissette. “For me, if something alarming revealed itself during the initial, noninvasive procedure, I might go to the next, more invasive step. That didn’t happen; thankfully, all systems were go. But I support a woman’s decision, no matter what it is, about these kinds of tests.”

## THIRD TRIMESTER

**If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.**

Tossing and turning in the middle of the night due to physical discomfort and soaring hormone levels is not getting Morissette down. “If I wake up at 3, OK. I’m up. I’m lucky, though, because I can eventually get back to bed and turn off the alarm. Being able to sleep late into the morning has saved me!”



## PLUS: LABOR AND DELIVERY

**Make a birth plan—but be prepared for anything.**

“I worry about the pain of labor,” she admits. “But the fact that it has a purpose—bringing a baby into the world—makes me think I can get through it. We’ll see. It’s not like putting your hand on a hot stove—there’s no purpose to that! But while I have an idea of how I want things to go, I know that I’m not the only one with intentions here. I’m open to the experience, no matter what it brings.”

zzzs for round-the-clock feedings, diaper changes, crying fits, and lullabies, as most mothers well know. According to Jodi Mindell, PhD, associate director of the Sleep Center at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia and author of *Sleeping Through the Night: How Infants, Toddlers, and Their Parents Can Get a Good Night’s Sleep*, “Recent studies show that mothers of young children lose as much as 120 hours of sleep each year. Sleep deprivation [among parents] is a universal problem.”

Still, Morissette isn’t losing too much sleep over the issue. She’s “surrendered,” a term she uses again and again during her conversation with WebMD, to the experience of tiredness. Just as she’s given in to what’s coming next: labor and delivery.

“Our intention is to do a natural birth at home,” she says. “But I ‘get’ that the baby has his own intentions. I have an amazing midwife, and I’m using a doula. But we have a backup plan: I’ve called all the doctors and we’ll be ready if something should happen.”

Smart, says Mindell, who comments: “Women who are at low risk—meaning they’re healthy before they become pregnant, are pregnant with one baby, it’s a full-term delivery, and the baby is head-down [a vertex birth]—these are the women who can have a wonderful, safe delivery at home.”

Mindell warns that women who fall into other categories should not risk a home birth. “When emergencies happen, it is an *emergency*—and a baby needs care quickly: oxygen, respirators. If you’re determined to deliver at home, have emergency transportation lined up. Find out ahead of time if your hospital has an OB on staff, and ask to meet that person—before the delivery. And remember, the goal is healthy mom, healthy baby. No matter how you bring your child into the world, you’re a hero.”

Morissette, beaming even as she talks of having a “low threshold for pain” and being nervous about how she’ll tolerate her upcoming labor, agrees. At the end of the day, she’s just thrilled to add a new note to her singer/composer/actor/author oeuvre: being a mom. ■

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Because I did resist for a few days; I was in denial that my whole life was about to change. And my body just shut down.”

Eating healthfully has long been an issue for the performer. Morissette has openly battled eating disorders in the past. Now she is the first to tell you she’s done the hard work—emotionally, physically, even spiritually—by slowly learning to respect her body enough to give it food rich in nutrients and to exercise in a balanced, not obsessive, way. Mostly,

