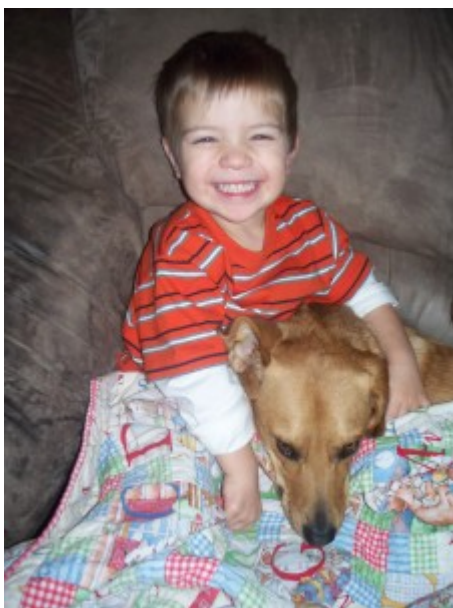


The Dude Is Growing!

My son had his 30-month ($2\frac{1}{2}$ years for you laypeople) check-up at the doctor today. All is well, though he wasn't very cooperative for the student doctor in training when it came to getting his nose and ears checked. And he had to get a shot, which of course was sad to witness. Unlike his 3 brave older sisters, he did cry, but he got over it quickly and proudly showed off his "owie" for the rest of the day. The little dude weighs 29.2 lbs. and is 2 feet and 10.5 inches tall.



Feeling Short And Old

I've been experiencing some sort of awful fatigue lately, so I begrudgingly went to the doctor to get it checked out. My husband had noticed me stop breathing in my sleep last week, so we suspect sleep apnea, but I have to undergo a sleep study to find out for sure. Good luck scheduling THAT during this Christmas season!

But the doctor also had a few interesting tidbits of advice, even though I felt extremely silly at the office since I actually saw my kids' pediatrician – he is also the resident sleep specialist. It didn't help any when I got measured by a Sponge Bob ruler and found out that I must be shrinking – I've always considered myself to be on the tall side, but this time, I didn't measure up – according to Sponge Bob, anyway. So not only am I shrinking, but somewhere along the line I've become a year-round allergy sufferer who also has mild asthma. And I just thought I was out of shape...

And to add insult to injury, I also got two new prescription medicines to add to my cabinet – just like any other senior citizen would get at a doctor's visit ☐

Sick Of Being Sick

The past week and a half in our house has been awful. It all came to a head last Friday when our two-year-old got sick in the car. Last weekend, when she wasn't sleeping, she was throwing up or in the words of Chandler, played by Matthew Perry on the tv show Friends, "visiting a town a little south of throwing up...". Later in the weekend, her baby brother was afflicted with the same illness, and now we had huge messes x2. Big sister Sammie got it later in the week, but luckily, the little ones started feeling better. Add in a snow day and a couple of weather delays, and our house was chaos for what seemed like forever. On top of everything, I had some sort of extreme fatigue. I was so worried about it that I even made a doctor's appointment and went in, where the doctor ran some blood tests and even gave me a neck xray since I had a strange achiness accompanying the fatigue. I guess it didn't occur to me that I could have the same virus that struck down the kids,

mainly because I didn't have the same (disgusting) symptoms they had, but I did look up some stuff on the internet in an attempt to ~~scare~~ diagnose myself. The good news is, my xrays and blood tests came back normal (well, I'm actually still waiting on one of the tests, but it's Friday and the nurses are out to lunch and won't be back until Monday afternoon – what is that? Can I have a job like that?), but the tests that did come back show that there is nothing wrong with my thyroid or my iron levels, both of which I thought were possibilities. So that's good... I guess. If there was something wrong with my body chemically, we'd be able to fix it, and then I'd have the energy I need to keep up with my 4 little kids. Now that most things came back normal, I don't know where to start to feel better... Although I do feel much better today, but still no where near normal, and that makes me think it might be the illness my kids had after all. But it was a bizarrely lengthy version of the stomach flu, and it will take us weeks (at least!) to catch up on all the work that didn't get done in the week and a half of illness, sigh.

My husband had to take off from some of his work so he could watch the kids while I rested, and especially with all the laundry we've had to do around here, Mt. Washmore is once again threatening to take over the second floor of our house. All this catching up, and I'm still exhausted... My husband seems to think I have sleep apnea, mostly because I snore often and loudly and I'm always needing more sleep. I forgot to bring this up to the doctor, but if I ever get ahold of her and that last test comes back normal, maybe we can go from there... I do seem to need an awful lot of sleep to function. Well, anyway, that's my story – sorry if I grossed anyone out (especially body-function-joke-hater Derek), but I thought people should know where I've been for the last two weeks. At least the kids are feeling better – it was beyond sad to see them crabby, lethargic and not able to keep anything down... Is it time for summer yet?!?

Checkup Time!

INSERT DISK HERE:



My son Christopher passed his 6 month baby checkup at the pediatrician with flying colors. If only adult physical tests were this easy – pass a block from hand to hand, pick up a raisin (which was promptly taken away because he’s too little – where’s the reward in that?), a turn of the head when your name is called... He has mastered all of it and is right where he should be developmentally. Except for one thing – sitting up. No I didn’t forget the ‘p’ – he *has* mastered *spitting* up... haha. But he can’t *sit* up unassisted yet, and he doesn’t even seem to be close to doing so. The problem is that he refuses to bend at the waist. If I can get him into a sitting position, (and that’s a big IF!) he arches his back immediately and tries to stand. I tried to explain this to the nurse so she wouldn’t think he is physically slow, but he lost points anyway. Never mind that he can use his legs to jump vigorously in his bouncer that hangs from the doorway, or that he can single-handedly pull and move a heavy dining room chair with his iron grip – he still loses points for not being able to sit unassisted. Oh well, if that’s how they score it, that’s how they score it. It’s not like it bothers me at all;

I actually find it amusing. I think he might be crawling and walking before he sits...

Other news from the doctor appointment is that he weighs 16 lbs. 13oz. which is in the 30 percentile for weight. An easy explanation of the percentile comparison is this: If you take 100 babies my son's age, 30 of them would be at his weight or lower and 70 of them would weigh more than he does. He is $27\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, which puts him in the 75th percentile for height. His head circumference is 45.2 cm which is exactly average. I think he is probably our most average-sized baby; our oldest was always small for her age and the two in the middle were huge – Disney was once in the 100th percentile for height! Just another example of how different kids are, even ones in the same family. My 4 children physically remind me of each other, yet it's so fun to watch their differences emerge as they learn and grow! Here are Disney and Christopher, my two youngest:



Now THAT Is One HORRIBLE

Stage Manager

Wow – what happened here? Due to a props department mix-up, an actor was doing a suicide scene with a real knife instead of a fake one. Luckily, he wasn't killed, but this qualifies as a bit more than a simple mistake, wouldn't you say? Perhaps I'll think twice about offering to stage manage anything in the future – apparently there's a lot at stake. And for you actors who read this, how much trust do you have in your props people? And how much will you trust them after reading something like this?

From Time.com

by Adam Smith

Try this for an Agatha Christie plotline: performing on stage inside Vienna's Burgtheater, one of Europe's oldest and grandest, an actor takes a knife to his throat in his character's desperate attempt at suicide. As audience applause fills the opulent theater, blood pours from the actor's neck. But something's not right. Buckling and staggering his way off stage, the actor collapses to the floor. That's because the knife, and the harm that it's done, are both tragically real. Unfortunately for Daniel Hoevels, a 30-year-old actor from Hamburg, those pages from a murder-mystery came to life last Saturday night during a performance at the Burgtheater of Mary Stuart, Friedrich Schiller's play about the wretched life of Mary Queen of Scots. Rushed to the nearby Lorenz Bohler hospital having sliced through skin and fat tissue but thankfully not his main artery, Hoevels was fortunate to survive. "Just a little deeper," said Wolfgang Lenz, a doctor who treated him, "and he would have been drowning in his own blood."

The police investigation into the calamity points more to a foul-up than foul play. Viennese police say they're not probing the possibility of attempted murder; press reports had speculated a "jealous rival" could have had a hand in Hoevels'

injury. Instead, investigators are focusing on possible negligence within the props department of Hoevels' Thalia Theater ensemble. According to local media, the company picked up the knife in Vienna to replace one brought from their Hamburg base that was then found to be defective. One possibility: that props staff forgot to blunt that new blade, which, police say, still had the price tag on it.

*Hoevels himself seems to have put the snafu behind him. "I am now absolutely fine again," he told local media, "but I will always for the rest of my working life have a strange feeling about this scene." After reprising the role Sunday, albeit with neck bandaged, Hoevels headed back to Hamburg Monday in preparation for his role in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. In that play, the long-suffering title character winds up shooting himself in the head. Someone might want to double-check the gun.*

Baby Diary

The first year of life for children is full of constant development and changes – babies do new things every single day. Realizing this, I decided to make a diary for each of my kids about their first year. I would write in it from time to time to summarize all of their many changes, hoping some day they'll enjoy reading them. I was writing in my son's Baby Diary the other day when it occurred to me that I should share it on my blog; especially since he's been very crabby lately and it's been really difficult for me to write blog posts with him in my arms. He was born on July 11, 2008.

Christopher's Diary:

7/16/08 – went to dr. checkup for your slight jaundice. dr.

said everything looked good and you weigh 7 lbs. 11 oz.

7/17/08 – Actually, since it was the 12:01 showing, it's actually the 18th... but your first movie in the theater was the Dark Knight. You barely stirred and did drink a bottle during the movie. You didn't make a peep.

7/19/08 – You attended your first stage play, the Music Man. You were very good, except you pooped early in the show and were crabby and had to be taken out, but only for a few mins. so you could get your diaper changed

7/20/08 – umbilical cord stump falls off – you are 9 days old.

8/11/08 – You had your one month check-up today! Everything looks good; you weigh 9 lbs. 14 oz. and are 22 in. long. Your head circumference is 38.3 cm. You didn't cry at all while getting weighed and measured.

8/13/08 – You smiled at Mommy!

9/3/08 – In the past week, you've started "talking" back to me! You smile really big when I smile at you and give you a big HI, and you smile at me every time you see me when you wake up. When you were born, you could hardly see any lashes, but now your eyelashes are getting long and beautiful! Your eyes are still a bright beautiful blue!

9/5/08 – You laughed for the first time – long and loud. And it was during Daddy's funny play, The Nerd. You laughed at the part where they're playing the 'I'm going on a trip' game. I don't know if you heard the other people laughing or it was just a coincidence, but it was SO cute!

9/12/08 – Today you had your 2 month dr appt. You are 12 lbs 9 oz and 23.25 inches long. Your head circumference is 44.5 cm. You fussed a little as they were examining you, but you didn't cry. The dr said you have dry skin and we have to watch your ears to make sure formula isn't going in there.

9/22/08 – For about a week now, you seem to recognize your bottle. You'll get extra excited when you see it and open your mouth. Your big sister Disney calls you "Beeber". Your big sister Sammie loves to hold you and is always asking questions about newborn babies. She calls them "born" babies.

10/16/08 – You are 3 months old, and you are starting to play

with toys. The other day I saw you “discovering” your hands, and ever since you’ve been grabbing things. You know how to put your fist in your mouth. You’re still spitting up a lot. Not as much at a time as Disney did when she was a baby, but many times throughout the day.

11/5/08 – You’ve been playing with toys for awhile now; you can grab things and you try to draw them into your mouth. You love making g sounds – ga, goo, ggg. You are still a very happy little guy and smile at everyone, making their days!

12/4/08 – Time flies and you are almost 5 months old! Disney used to call you Beeber, and the name stuck, so we call you that sometimes. Disney now calls you Kipper. You’ve had some crabby days, but most of the time, you’re still very smiley. You’ve been experimenting with vocalizations and you LOVE to stand! You do not bend at the waist! We tried the tot wheels (walker) for the first time the other day, and you like it for short periods of time since you just hang in there – your feet don’t touch the floor yet. Most of the time, you’re pretty good about sleeping at night, usually waking up only once. But you also have bad nights where you won’t let Daddy sleep! You like baths, and you’re really starting to like toys. You play with the busybox on your crib, and try to eat EVERYTHING! You might be teething because you try to gnaw on everything. You’ve been trying cereal and if your gums seem really sore, Mommy and Daddy have been giving you a treat – a dab of peanut butter on your pacifier. You LOVE it! You found your feet a few weeks ago, and you were trying to get your toes in your mouth. We are excited to take you to see Santa pretty soon!

Our Friend, The Doctor

With 4 kids, many of them small in years, we are at the doctor's office lots. We are so lucky to be really happy with our pediatrician, especially since we see him often. Today was another such visit – time for our 2 year and 4 month check-ups for the little ones.

Disney (2 yrs. old) liked the fishies in the waiting room and the Dora sticker she got at the end but that's about it. She didn't want the doctor near her, she didn't want to be weighed, measured, nor have her heart listened to, and she didn't want to walk in front of the doctor like he asked. Best we could tell during all the kicking and screaming, she is 2 feet, 10 inches tall and weighs 25.5 lbs.

On the other hand, Disney's baby brother Christopher seemed to love the doctor's office. Then again, he smiles all the time, so it's hard to tell. He smiled when they measured his head – both times, since the nurse forgot the measurement from the first time (43 cm). He smiled when he was weighed (15 lbs. 6 oz.), and he smiled some more when his length was measured to be 25.5 inches. He's a really good baby – the doctor says he acts more like a 5 month old than a 4 month old because of the strength in his limbs and how he uses them.

Disney's a great kid also, but she is two years old. And "terrible two's" is not just one of those sayings; it's based on truth. Disney was the sweetest baby and toddler you could imagine... then she turned two. And she's still sweet, she just has a miniscule amount of patience and tolerance for things that don't go her way. She could be chatting happily about doggies one minute, and the next thing I know, she's melted onto the floor into a puddle of two.

But there must be something going on with the body chemistry of two-year-olds. Everyone knows they're like that, and it's

not just an unearned bad reputation. If it weren't for the "terrible two's", I think I would want an even larger family – but it's the dreadfulness of the terrible two's that give me pause – only one more bout of terrible twos to battle, if we can survive Disney's, of course!

I Know One Business That Isn't Suffering In This Economy

We had to go to the ER yesterday, and it was bustling! Since this is our second visit in a month, I can tell you that unfortunately, yesterday's busyness was not any different from the norm. Seeing as how we're talking about a hospital as a business that's doing well in this awful economy, that is not a good thing.

Here's what happened, and it's not a matter of life or death (at least for us), so don't be alarmed about the ER visit. My husband had been having severe stomach pain since Sunday afternoon that was getting worse, so that's why we went to the ER. Turns out to be a virus, so that's great of course! We were thinking kidney stone or something worse, so we're very thankful. While we were in the ER, some interesting events unfolded regarding some of the other patients. First, there was the girl who left her contacts in for 2 weeks out of "laziness". She finally took them out, and the next morning, her eyes hurt, they were all swollen, and she couldn't see. The doctor speculated that the contacts had become fused to her eyeball and actually tore the top layer off when she removed them. They sent her to an eye specialist.

Next was the couple who came in with the woman (girl actually – they were probably in their late teens or early twenties) complaining of burning during urination. My husband overheard the doctor ask the girl how many sexual partners she's had in the last 60 days. She answered, "just my boyfriend." Then they asked the boyfriend the same question, but they did it while the girlfriend was in the bathroom, and he said he didn't know – yikes. More than 10, they asked, and he said, "yeah." I wonder if they waited to ask the boyfriend until the girlfriend was out of the room on purpose. I wonder if they're going to tell the girlfriend. Makes an interesting moral argument... there's something someone should know, yet there's doctor-patient confidentiality... but then again, the boyfriend wasn't a patient, his girlfriend was the patient. Maybe the doctor's job dictates whether or not he would have to tell the girlfriend. What if her symptoms are indicative of an STD, then the doctor would have to tell her that of course... wonder if he'd mention her boyfriend's infidelity as well. Well, that's enough time on that story – onto the third ER story, which is sad...

The doctors and nurses started rushing around even more than they were before, and they all kept talking about how they were about to get much busier. "Something's coming in..." they were saying. I started overhearing snippets of conversation including something about calling the state fire marshall and an autopsy... Turns out someone had been found dead in their basement after their house was on fire. That is not a usual occurrence around here; this was a big deal at the ER. There was a sheriff walking around, and a body bag was wheeled down the hall. A sad event, no doubt, but something that would seem like just another day at work to doctors and nurses working at an urban hospital. I wonder what the circumstances of the fire are; I read in the newspaper that when firefighters arrived, there was only a little smoke showing on the roof. The man was found dead in the basement, so that seems a little suspicious. The state fire marshall is

conducting a joint investigation with the sheriff's office, so maybe when they're done the story will be back in the newspaper. Well, anyway, I'm just relieved that all is well with my husband. I hope not to have to see if the ER remains busy any time soon!

Nocturnal Purple-Legged Baby

So how is life with 4 kids? One word – chaotic. I suppose some of that can be attributed to us not taking any time off from volunteering with the various community groups we are involved in... Most logical people would have done the smart thing and laid low for awhile. But us, we did just the opposite and jumped into a few new projects head first – oops. But, I do enjoy getting out and spending time with fellow adults, and besides, we've already committed ourselves, so it's too late now.

But anyway, the kids are adjusting just fine to having a new little brother. Our almost 2-year-old has reached the terrible twos officially, and she spends most of her time being upset or making messes. Figures, doesn't it, that she would reach this stage right as there's a new baby in the house. But it can't be helped, and we just have to grin and bear it for awhile until it passes. The upside is that her terrible twos are nowhere near the magnitude of the turmoil that her older sister caused in the house when she was going through them, but it's still hard to see our once sweet little girl being so nasty. I don't know what it is about the terrible twos, but every kid goes through them (maybe the terrible twos aren't so bad with boys? I'm hopeful...), and they can totally change a child's personality for months, even years. Little Disney was the sweetest baby and toddler, and

now that she is almost 2, she has begun tantruming (almost constantly), hitting, spitting, and biting. Much, if not all of the behavior comes from being so frustrated – she gets frustrated when people don't understand what she wants or when she thinks her sisters are taking things from her. Even if they're just trying to help her, if anyone is doing anything she doesn't like, she'll throw a tantrum. But what keeps me going is knowing that it's just the age, and she'll magically return to normal one day; that's how it works. It usually happens suddenly, almost as suddenly as it began – it's like a spell is broken, and hopefully it's sooner rather than later; but I'm prepared for the long haul because her sister's terrible twos (and boy, were they *terrible*) lasted from about the ages of 16 months until she was 4 years old.

And speaking of our 4-year-old, Sammie loves her new little brother and always wants to hold him. I'm trying to get better about how nervous it makes me; especially because Disney sees her older sisters holding him and then of course she wants to do it. But as time goes by, he gets stronger and less floppy, so eventually I can let them help more and be relaxed about it.

Taylor, our 8-year-old, loves her new little brother also, although with 2 younger sisters, she's kinda been there and done that, as far as new babies go. She is still a big help, especially with Disney, but she and Sammie fight constantly, and now Disney is starting to join in... If we could get a handle on some of the fighting, things would be much better around here. I feel like my kids fight, argue, and bicker *constantly*. I probably feel this way because it's true. Part of it is Disney being so frustrated all the time, and then neither she nor Sammie like to share things with others; and then also Taylor can be really nasty to Sammie, probably just cuz it's summer and they're sick of each other. Thank goodness school starts in less than 2 weeks. I say that now, but I'll also be losing my day-help when Taylor goes back to

school, so we'll have to see how things work out.

As for the little guy himself, Christopher is almost 4 weeks old, and he's doing well. He is a constant joy to have around, but aren't they all at this age? The only problem with him is that he seems to be nocturnal – wakes all night and sleeps during the day. Luckily for me, my husband is a light sleeper and wakes with him before I even hear anything. He is getting no sleep, but I told him weeks ago, once you let me start sleeping through the night, my body will get used to it and I won't wake up... I don't think he listened. But my sleeping-lightly days are over – during my pregnancy I awoke very easily at every little noise, but now I'm back to my I-could-sleep-through-Armageddon phase. I also warned Hubby that this baby was going to be nocturnal because in the womb, he wouldn't move much during the day, but he's start going crazy about 9pm until after I went to bed.

And almost all new babies bring with them the fear of something being wrong – the other day, Christopher's legs turned purple out of no where... I had just gotten him out of his stroller, but his straps weren't too tight or anything like that; I checked on them later. It was horribly scary to see his little purple legs, and I've never experienced that with my girls. But the doctor didn't seem to be too concerned; just something to take a look at next appointment – might be a blood vessel spasm, which I found out is not terribly uncommon in infants after looking it up on the internet. There is a condition called Raynaud's Syndrome that is characterized by purple limbs, however they're accompanied by extreme pain, and little Christopher was sleeping calmly while this happened. We'll see what the doctor says on Monday.

That's about it for now; it's good to be sitting here blogging again – it's been so hectic for a few weeks that I was not in front of my computer enough to even blog. But then I started thinking of all my faithful readers I was disappointing, and I

thought I'd better make the time to give them something to read ☐

Flashback!

In the last few days, my recovery from the emergency c-section has not been going well. I awoke from a nap Thursday night feeling awful, but luckily my medication kicked in, and I was able to enjoy the midnight showing of The Dark Knight – more on that later. Friday we met Grandma in South Bend Indiana which is halfway between Chicago where she lives and Ohio where we live to transfer my kids for a week's vacation with Grandma. I felt awful all day, and I started shivering in the restaurant. I knew there was something really wrong when I went outside into the 90° oven and actually *enjoyed* it – uh oh.

When I got back to Ohio, I had an appointment with my doctor for her to take out my staples (yes, they had to actually use *staples* to put me back together, yuck) and that actually went well. Hardly hurt at all, just a little pinch, and it didn't take long. I brought up my symptoms to my doctor and she said everything was normal, and I believed her because when I had my other babies, I would heal up right away, so I figured these were all just side effects from the cesarean. But I took another nap when I got home and when I woke up, I felt like I was dying – that's really the only way to describe it. We took my temperature and it was 102.7°, so of course I had chills, the sweats, headache, and pain. A quick look on the internet gave us the diagnosis: mastitis – a common infection often suffered by breast-feeding mothers. We called the doctor and they wouldn't prescribe any antibiotics over the phone, so we headed to the hospital for the 2nd time in a

week...

The admissions people panicked when they saw us coming in with the baby, but we quickly explained it wasn't him, thank goodness. Anyway, after a quick look, the ER doctor confirmed our internet diagnosis and sent us home with a prescription. But since all the pharmacies were closed in our town, they gave me some medicine right then and there. "Name and birthdate", they always ask at the hospital before they give you your meds, and I was like, FLASHBACK! I thought I was done with this for awhile! But for spending a Friday night in the ER, it wasn't so bad; we were actually in and out in an hour. If this had happened in suburban Chicago where I used to live, it would have taken 3-4 hours to wait our turn in the ER, and they would have wheeled a few body bags past us while we were waiting. So today, I feel much better comparatively, and since the girls are with grandma, I slept until 11:30, so I'm sure that also helped. The antibiotics seem to be working already, and it was nice to wake up and not feel like I was dying, something that hasn't happened for a few days. I also feel better that now I think my recovery from everything is headed in the right direction, whereas when I felt crappy and didn't know why, it was discouraging because I was thinking, will I ever feel better?

My husband is peeved at my OB-GYN for not checking me more thoroughly during my visit with her yesterday. I agree; I did mention my symptoms and she was too dismissive, but being a man (especially one who won't listen to doctor's orders – if the doctor tells him to do something or recommends some sort of exam or test and he doesn't want to do it, he just won't) I don't think he understands how important to me it is to have a woman OB-GYN, and she is the only one in town. Besides, I do like her, she is gentle and she has been through 3 c-sections herself, so she knew exactly what to tell me about what to expect. If we do have any more children, there will be some debate about which doctor we will use. Well, anyway... off to

Walmart to get my *third* prescription this week!