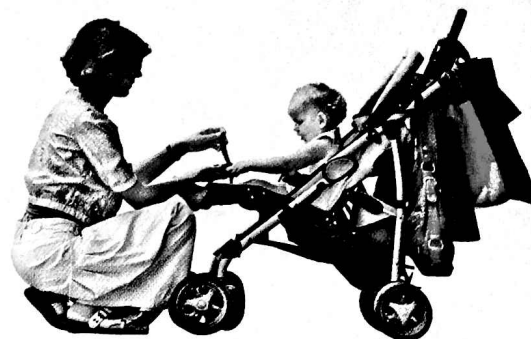


THE COMEBACK, WITH KID

BY EMMA WILLIAMSON



New to the whole working mother thing? Welcome to your polyester years

THREE MONTHS AFTER HAVING MY SON, I found myself in a fashion dilemma. The managing partner of my firm invited me to a client dinner, which immediately filled me with dread. Panicked, I tried on my entire closet, finally unearthing a dress and jacket that fit (if I squinted at my reflection). The sheer terror of having nothing to wear forced me to accept that motherhood had changed my body. And I'm not just talking about a few extra pounds, ladies. I now have larger feet and a wider rib cage, not to mention some hefty pipes from carrying around my little guy. It was time to adjust my wardrobe to match.

New moms have to assess their new figure honestly and determine what suits it. Maybe you preferred skinnies before, but feel more comfortable now in boot-cut pants. Or maybe, like me, flowy blouses are your saving grace. Remember, your body is most likely still changing, so buy pieces that can be altered or are forgiving in fit and fabric.

Style coach Wendy Woods of the Refinery made polyester her best friend once she became a mom. "I never thought I would say that in my life, but it's such a practical fabric," she tells me. "Good polys can look like silk, but they're washable and they don't stain when they get wet like silk does." Me, I had to befriend patterns, thanks to a kid who loves to tug at me with peanut butter on his hands.

It's not just what I wear that's changed, but even how I get dressed. Gone are my leisurely mornings spent selecting an outfit while enjoying that first cup of coffee. Planning ahead is crucial. I have to avoid dangly earrings and necklaces (my toddler will grab them, break them and/or eat them). I always choose pieces that are easy — no complicated straps or closures — and nursing friendly. And comfortable footwear is vital: pushing a stroller through mad pedestrian traffic to daycare in the morning is much more tolerable in kitten heels than in five-inchers.

Even with all this tried-and-true sartorial wisdom at hand, I was still apprehensive about updating my wardrobe for my first day back at Dentons. I sought help from Erin Nadler of Better Styled, a stylist who helps lots of new moms head back to work, many of whom feel they've been out of the fashion game for too long.

Her shopping list for legal professionals in my shoes? Two fitted dresses, a few wrap-style tops or shirts with draping or ruching, a great black (or navy) pant and a seasonless three-piece suit. With Erin's help, I chose a fabulous cap-sleeve navy knit dress with peplum and zipper detailing to rock the hell out of my first day back in the office.

Lawyer-moms have enough to worry about without adding workwear to the list. Make the transition back to work easy on yourself. Get rid of anything that doesn't make you feel fabulous, and fill your closet with pieces that do your new life justice. We all deserve to come back to work with a bang, looking and feeling good. Just don't tell anyone it's polyester. That will be our secret. ■

Family ties

How to pull off that awesome accessory you inherited from your grandfather

by Braden Alexander



Eleven years ago, when Rahool Agarwal left home in Edmonton to study law at the University of Toronto, his grandfather gave him one of his ties. It was narrow, the kind popular in the '60s.

"Everything comes back in style. You just have to wait," says Agarwal, now an associate at Norton Rose Fulbright LLP in Toronto. He's right — skinny ties came back in style, replacing the thick power ties of the '90s. And his grandfather's tie became an instant staple in his wardrobe. "I wasn't sure it would look good, but I ended up loving it."

It's not exactly a subtle accessory — the tie is red, with a paisley pattern. Not the type of thing you see very often on Bay Street. But Agarwal knows how to pull it off.

"The trick is not to overdo it. My view is that in a law firm, you can't be too over-the-top, especially as a young lawyer. So I always pair it with my uniform: a bespoke navy suit."

More often than not, you'll find Agarwal in one of three suits: one navy blue shadow check, one light navy pinstripe and one steel blue sharkskin. All two-button, all tailor-made by Garrison Bespoke. The man knows what he likes — and he knows what he looks good in.

"I'm comfortable with how it looks on me; I'm not worrying about my appearance. It gives me confidence." And with confidence in a uniform that works, he can get away with pieces like his grandfather's tie — small flashes that stand out with a nod to his family history and offer a small glimpse into his personality. And on Bay Street, that kind of small touch goes a long way.



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