



## Chapter 1.

### BEFORE YOUR BABY'S ARRIVAL

*This Chapter tells you some of the things you can do before your baby is born, to make life easier for you and your family later.*

**Giving birth.** Your prenatal care doctor or clinic staff should be able to explain the choices you have of where to give birth. Although most women have their babies in hospitals, some may choose other settings, such as a birthing center. Your doctor will tell you if there are medical reasons why you should have your baby in a hospital. Also, talk with your doctor about options for early hospital discharge, having your baby spend more time with you in the hospital (called rooming-in), and how your partner may participate in labor and delivery. Most hospitals have tours to explain their procedures. Many hospitals also will offer childbirth classes, including information about breastfeeding.

**Selecting a doctor or clinic.** Before your baby is born is a good time to select your baby's doctor (such as a pediatrician or family physician). You may also choose a doctor or nurse practitioner team, or a pediatric nurse practitioner to take care of your baby. It is better to make this decision while you have the time to carefully choose who will advise you about your baby's health over the years. You may ask your own doctor or a nurse at the clinic for a recommendation; your friends or family members who have children of their own are good sources, too. If you have other children, you will probably find it easier to use the same care provider for all of your children. Once you have located a potential care provider, make an appointment to meet him or her if you can. Think about these questions as you decide whether this person is the one for you:

- What have been the experiences of friends (or family) with this care provider?
- Do you feel comfortable with and trust him or her?
- Do you feel that he or she will take the time to answer your questions or help you deal with new situations?
- How does he or she feel about issues of importance to you (such as breastfeeding or toilet training)?
- Is the office in a convenient location, so that you and your baby can get there easily?
- Will he or she be available by telephone if you need advice?

- What are the office hours, telephone hours, and fees?
- How can he or she be reached in an emergency?
- What hospital does the doctor work at?
- Does this care provider have any special training?

*Remember*, your doctor, nurse or clinic staff will be your partner in looking after your baby's health and development. You can get a head start on developing that partnership by choosing a care provider before your baby is born.

*Deciding to breastfeed your baby.* Breastfeeding is the best way to nourish and nurture your new baby. There are many good reasons why you should choose to breastfeed:

- Human breastmilk provides the right nutrients in the right amounts for your baby.
- It is the only food your baby needs for the first 4-6 months.
- Breastmilk helps prevent infection and certain allergies.
- It's convenient—always ready, at the right temperature, and it requires no special equipment or cleanup.
- It's inexpensive.
- Breastfeeding will help shrink your uterus back to the way it was before you became pregnant.
- It helps to create a special physical and emotional bond between you and your baby.

When you think about all of these factors, it's easy to see why doctors recommend that you breastfeed. Ask your doctor or clinic staff any questions you may have about breastfeeding, and decide now to breastfeed, so that you are ready to begin as soon as your baby is born.

If there are reasons why you cannot or should not breastfeed, remember that feeding time still gives you a chance to help build the special bond between you and your baby. It still provides a time when there can be closeness and caring.

**Packing to go to the hospital.** Pack a small suitcase or duffel bag in advance. That way, you'll have one less thing to worry about when labor begins.

**Pack:**

- 2-3 nightgowns, with front openings so that you can nurse (you may want to borrow these from friends, or you may wear hospital gowns)
- a robe
- 2 nursing bras (if you plan to breastfeed)
  
- non-skid slippers
- underwear
- something loose-fitting to wear home
- toiletries
- a small amount of money (in case you want to buy a newspaper or magazine)
- a sleeper or t-shirt for your baby to wear home (some hospitals may provide one)
- a baby blanket (or several, in winter months)

When you and your baby get ready to leave the hospital, you may want to ask the staff if there are disposable baby items you may take home (such as baby's brush, cap, soap dish, thermometer, nasal syringe, washbasin). Also, the hospital may give you brochures, diapers or other things. If so, you'll need a little extra room in your suitcase to take them home.

**Preparing your family for change.** Having a baby is an exciting event, and a big change for your whole family, your partner and other children. Other family members may need to adjust to this change in their own ways. Be sure to involve them however you can in getting ready for the baby to arrive. If you have other children:

- Reassure them that you love them now and will after the baby is born.
- Plan with them a few special things they will do when the baby comes home.
- Talk with them about the changes they might expect when the baby comes home, and how much fun it will be.
- If an older child is ready to be moved from the crib you will use for your new baby to a bed, make this move well before you deliver.

- Find out if your older children can visit you and their baby sister or brother in the hospital.
- If you think friends or family might bring gifts for baby, find something special to give your other children when the baby comes home. These need not be expensive gifts-just something to let them know you are thinking about them, too.

Also, take time to talk with your partner about the changes you expect. Ask your family for their opinions and their help. Getting ready for baby doesn't mean just finding a place for him or her to live in your home, but also a place in your family.

**Equipment you will need.** Babies only need a few preparations:

- A place to sleep and to change diapers, clothing
- A place to bathe and some supplies for bathing (and for feeding if you will not be breastfeeding)
- A federally approved car safety seat



**A place to sleep.** You will need a quiet place for baby to sleep, and something with sturdy sides for baby to sleep in, to keep him or her from rolling out. At first, a soft but firm pad (such as folded towels) or a thin plastic covered foam pad can serve as a mattress. The pad or mattress should be waterproof or have a waterproof covering and should tightly fit into the cradle or bassinet. Even a basket (such as a laundry basket) or a bureau drawer with strong sides (placed on the floor) will work just as well as a cradle or bassinet. In fact, because your baby will outgrow it quickly, you may not want to buy a cradle or bassinet (although you may be able to borrow one from a friend).

However, you will need a safe crib as baby grows larger—by about 3 or 4 months. Before you decide on a new or used crib, use the safety checklist below to make sure it will be a safe place for your baby to sleep.

### **Crib safety checklist**

- Side slats of a crib should be less than 2 3/8 inches apart (so baby can't get caught between them.)
- Other openings—such as decorative cutouts should be avoided (so baby can't get caught in them.)
- Corner posts should be less than 5/8 inch high above the rails; take off any that are higher (so that baby's clothing cannot catch on taller posts.)
- When the mattress is in the crib, the crib side in the raised position should be at least 20 inches above the mattress surface
- The mattress should fit snugly—you shouldn't be able to get more than two fingers between the mattress and the crib side (so baby can't become wedged between them and get hurt.)
- Bumper pads should fit around the entire crib, and tie or snap into place in at least 6 places (after they are tied, trim off excess straps so baby won't chew or be caught in them.)
- Remove bumper pads when baby learns to pull up to a standing position (so baby won't use them to try to crawl out.)
- Never use any type of thin plastic—such as trash bags—as mattress covers (plastic film can cling to baby's face and smother him or her.)
- Remove and destroy all plastic wrapping materials, tying plastic in knots first (children can suffocate if they play with plastic.)

- An old painted crib should be stripped of paint (not sanded); repaint with only high quality household enamel paint—do not use old paint; and check the label to make sure it is lead-free; let paint dry thoroughly (old paint may have enough lead to poison a baby who chews on his or her crib.)



You may find that a portable mesh crib is easier to handle than a wooden one. If you choose a crib with mesh sides, be sure to keep all of the sides raised because they can form a hazardous pocket when lowered.

**A place to change diapers.** This place may be a changing table, the top of a dresser, a countertop or another flat surface covered with a pad, next to a wall so that your baby won't roll off. It will be easier if the spot you choose is near a source of water and is near where the baby sleeps. Often, for convenience, a second place is helpful near where you spend most of your day.

You may want to have a night light or a comfortable chair near by for you and your baby. Suggestions for supplies you might need are included in the Shopping List beginning on page 18.

**A place for bathing.** You will need the following:

- a warm room
- a table or counter top of convenient height to place the baby on
- a tub or dishpan (plastic is lightweight)

- a bar of mild soap or a soap liquid prepared for babies
- a cotton wash cloth or other soft cloth
- a towel

These items are included in the Shopping List on page 18.

**Buying bed covers and baby clothes.** A list of supplies you will need for the crib or bed is included in the Shopping List on page 18. Some parents find that it's easier to have just a few bed covers and baby clothes, so they don't have to sort, fold and store so many things. Others find that having a few more means they don't have to do laundry as often. The Shopping List is just a guide—you decide what's best for you. Never use an adult-sized pillow in your baby's crib—a baby could suffocate in it. In fact, your baby doesn't need a pillow.

A list of baby clothes is included in the Shopping List on page 18 to get you started. If you have friends who have had babies, you may want to ask their advice about what you will need. *A few tips to consider:*

- Don't forget sources of baby clothes such as gifts, hand-me-downs from friends or family, or secondhand from thrift shops or garage sales. Babies often outgrow clothes before they are worn out.
- Buy 3-month or larger sizes, not "newborn" sizes—clothes shrink and baby grows quickly.
- If you use a drying rack instead of a dryer, clothes will shrink less.
- Choose basic colors so that everything goes together.
- Cotton won't hold odors after washing—some synthetics will—and cotton is better for sensitive skin.
- Make sure everything is washable, preferably in hot water to kill germs.
- Snaps or fabric hook and loop fastenings are easier and safer than buttons.
- Receiving blankets can be used as blankets in warm weather, as towels, or for bundling before and after baths.

**Choosing diapers.** Your choices are:

- buying and washing cotton diapers
- using cotton diapers provided by a diaper service
- using disposable diapers
- using a combination of methods

Buying and washing cotton diapers yourself is the least expensive choice, but a diaper service or disposables will save you a lot of time and work. A diaper service may be cheaper than the cost of disposables. You may want to compare the costs of these options where you live before you decide. One caution: Avoid “super-absorbent” disposable diapers. It’s hard to tell when they are wet, and keeping a wet diaper on your baby can cause diaper rash.

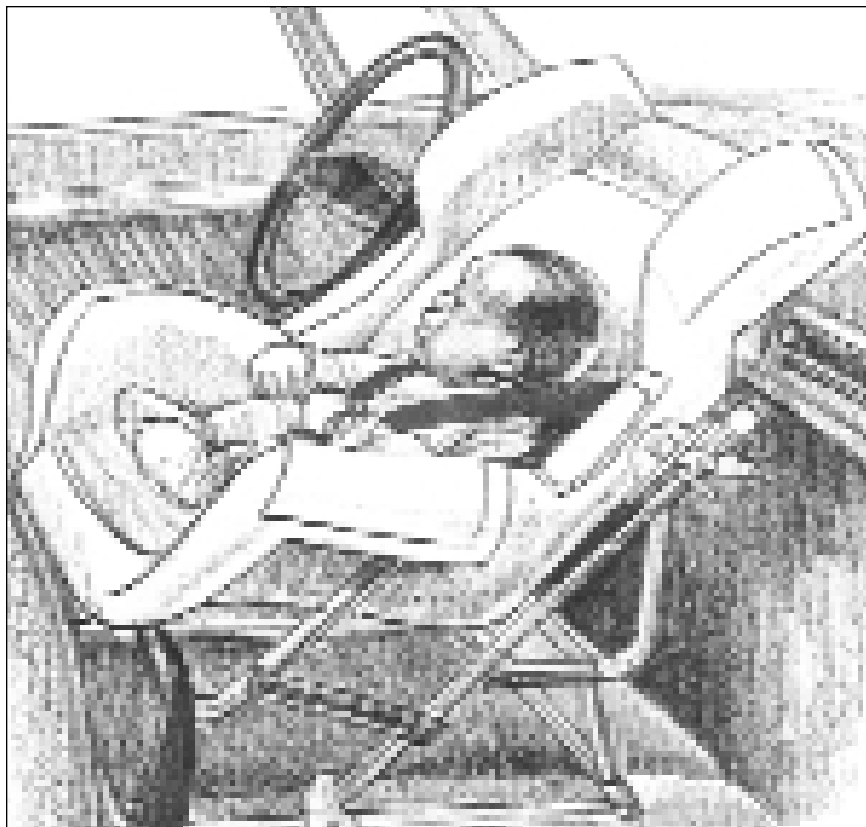


You may find that having some cotton diapers is helpful— even if you choose disposables—to use when burping your baby and to protect your and baby’s clothes from spills and spitting up. They are especially good when others pick up the baby and hold the baby close to them!

**Car safety seats.** All 50 States and the District of Columbia have child passenger safety laws. You should use a federally approved child safety seat the first time, when you take your baby home from the hospital, and every time he or she rides in a car. **REMEMBER:** all infants must face rearward in a car until they reach approximately 20 pounds or 9-12 months of age.

*There are two types of seats that can be used for a new born baby:*

- Infant safety seats are designed for infants only, and must always face rearward.



- Convertible seats must be in the infant position (semi-reclining) and also facing rearward regardless of whether they are placed in the front or rear seat.

The convertible model in the toddler position facing forward will accommodate the older child who can sit up unassisted, to about 4 years of age. It is not recommended that you purchase the infant safety seat, because your baby will quickly outgrow the safety seat used for newborns. Check with your doctor, clinic or hospital to find sources for a loan or rental of an infant seat. Be sure to read and follow carefully the manufacturer's directions for installing any child safety seat in your car and for securing your baby in the seat. ALL SEATS MUST BE ANCHORED SECURELY TO THE CAR WITH THE VEHICLE'S SAFETY BELT.

**Shopping List.** You may want to take this list with you when you go shopping, or refer to it if a friend or relative asks you for suggestions for a baby gift. Also, check with friends for "hand-me-downs" before you buy—

and don't forget secondhand stores and garage sales. Babies often outgrow things before they wear out. Remember to wash all items before using them.

### **Crib Items**

- cradle or bassinet for newborn to sleep in safety (optional)
- crib with bumper pads (see Crib Safety Checklist on page 14)
- at least 4 crib sheets (fitted, stretchy cotton knits are easiest to use)
- 1-2 crib-sized mattress pads, waterproof
- at least 4 flannel covered rubber pads (place one over the mattress pad to protect it)
- 2 blankets or comforters or
- a blanket bag or sleeping bag, washable (won't come off as easily as a blanket, but get one that is easy to get on and off baby)

### **Clothes (to get you started)**

- 4-6 flannel receiving blankets
- 6 T-shirts with snaps, at least 3 month size (avoid those that go over the head—they are harder to put on)
- diapers, 4-6 dozen cotton or 2 boxes newborn-sized disposable
- socks or booties (or bare feet for summer babies)
- 4-6 stretch sleepers with snaps on both legs, no smaller than 3-month size (winter babies) or
- 4-6 kimonos or nightgowns with drawstring bottoms (summer babies)
- cardigan sweater or jacket (or other outerwear for winter babies)
- a sun hat or cap (also to sleep in if it is cold)

### **Nursery Items**

- baby rectal thermometer
- dresser, chest of drawers, closet or clean dry box for storage
- clothes hamper, basket or box (for dirty clothes)
- diaper pail with cover
- diaper bag or carry-all
- pad or blanket to change baby on

- rocker (optional)
- nightlight (optional)
- wall hangings or crib mobiles installed high, out of baby's reach (optional)

### **Toilet Items**

- baby shampoo
- baby lotion
- mild soap
- alcohol
- zinc oxide paste or diaper rash ointment
- cotton wash cloths or non-woven "disposable" cloth (can be machine-washed)
- cotton balls
- a plastic basin dishpan or tub
- 2-3 small towels (or hooded towels)

### **Other Items**

- infant / child car safety seat

Although you don't have to have these items, you might want to consider:

- birth announcements
- a baby book, journal, or photo album
- playpen
- high chair
- infant carrier
- stroller
- infant seat
- thank you cards
- camera, film, flashbulbs