

Baby Essentials

Things to buy for your newborn... and you!

Shopping for your newborn is one of the most thrilling pleasures in life. But the final few weeks of your pregnancy can make walking about uncomfortable. So do try to get these essentials at least a month before your due date.

Wondering what to buy? Any baby resource guide will give you pages of ideas. But we've gone a step further to include suggestions from experienced parents. We've also included a [printable Shopping for Baby checklist](#) to bring with you. Enjoy!

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Baby Clothes

- One-piece, day-wear bodysuits
- Long-sleeved/ long-legged sleep suits
- Cottony tops
- Dress-up clothes for bringing baby out
- Mittens and booties/ socks (you won't need shoes till baby is beginning to walk)
- Soft hat to protect baby from the sun
- Jacket or sweater for colder weather or long waits in air-conditioned hospital waiting rooms

How to choose baby clothing

Material: Clothing should generally be soft, breathable and comfortable with fuss-free openings to allow for easy diapering. Cotton is great – baby will not get too sweaty or scratchy in warm weather, plus it's easy to wash and wear. You may want to consider removing tags or labels that irritate sensitive areas like neck folds. For the same reason, look for finished seams when buying baby clothes so that there are no rough edges. Avoid zippers as they can pinch tender baby skin.

Type: Clothes with snaps under the crotch prevent the cloth from riding up. One-piece bodysuits, usually called "onesies", have crotch-snaps that make diapering and laundry much simpler. Onesies can be short-sleeved and short-legged to prevent baby from feeling hot when it's too sunny or humid. Choose longer-legged onesies for bedtime. Ensure that head and leg openings are wide. Apart from bodysuits, tops that skim the navel or have soft hems will prevent irritation to baby's cord while it's still

intact. Mittens and booties serve double-duty – they don't only keep out chills but also prevent baby from scratching himself.

Size: Newborn-size clothes (usually marked 0 - 3) can become tight after the first few weeks so think about buying big. This also helps if you have a larger-than-expected baby. But give in to one or two too-cute-to-resist newborn-size outfits just for the sake of dressing your little angel up.

Quantity: Though newborns are messy, you may not need to buy dozens of clothes. About five pieces of each item will be helpful. How much clothing baby really needs really depends on how frequently you do your laundry.

The little details: Look for flame-retardant clothing and always prioritise function over fashion. Fancy bows and ribbons or animal-shape buttons are adorable but also pose a choking or strangulation hazard. Also, choose shirts or tees that button down the front as babies do not like having clothes pulled over their heads. It may be more practical to buy unisex clothes (not just blue or pink) if you plan to have another child in the near future. Whenever possible, wash new clothes before using them. This not only ensures that they are clean but also softens the material. Never use too much detergent when washing baby clothes. Detergent residue can cause serious skin problems on baby's fragile skin.

Crib and Bedding

- Sturdy baby crib.
- Firm, baby-safe mattress.
- Thin bumper pads that can be safely secured to the crib.
- Waterproof mattress protector.
- Fitted bed sheets to fit mattress size.
- Cotton blankets
- To prevent suffocation, avoid using pillows and bolsters until baby is 12 months old.

Other "good to have" nursery furniture

- Diaper-changing table that is low and kind to your back. Pick one that has handy shelving or pockets for wipes, clean diapers, safety pins and so on.
- Baby-clothing dresser, wardrobe or drawer cabinet. To organise baby's clothes, bed linen and items like diaper packets, toiletries etc.
- Rocking chair or glider. This makes rocking baby to sleep more comfortable for the both of you.
- Toy bin and/ or bookshelf to store baby's toys and board books. It's never too early to start reading to your baby. Positioning books close to you (such as near the rocker) will remind you of this every bedtime.
- Playpen. A good quality, portable playpen can assure baby's safety if you need to put him down in an emergency. Portable playpens also double up as travel beds for older babies.

See our article on [Nursery Safety and SIDS](http://www.mumcentre.com/index.php?option=com_classifieds&act=resource&task=details&type=19&resourceid=274) (link to http://www.mumcentre.com/index.php?option=com_classifieds&act=resource&task=details&type=19&resourceid=274) for tips on buying nursery furniture.

Feeding

If you are breastfeeding:

- Breast pump. A manual pump may be handy but an electrical pump is usually faster. Get a breast pump set that comes with a bag if you want to pump milk at work.
- Milk storage containers (you will need to sterilise them before each use).

It's a good idea to have feeding bottles on hand even if you plan to breastfeed exclusively.

If you are bottle-feeding:

- 120ml (4oz) feeding bottles with newborn/ small size teats.
- 240ml (8oz) feeding bottles (change teats according to baby's age).
- Feeding bottle steriliser and tongs. A six-bottle steriliser may be ideal.
- Bottle drying rack (optional).
- Bottle and teat brush.
- A few tins of infant formula. Be sure to check the expiry date. You may want to buy two different brands of formula just in case baby is allergic to one of them.

Other feeding essentials:

- Cotton bibs.
- Cotton burp cloths or towels. A clean facecloth or nappy can serve double duty as a burp cloth.

Diapering

If you are using nappies:

- Cotton nappies. You may need at least two dozen.
- For quick clean-ups, use waterproof underpants with Velcro fasteners.

If you are using disposable diapers:

- Newborn-sized diapers. You may need at least two packets.

Other diapering essentials:

- Diaper-changing pad.
- Towel or cotton nappy for lining the diaper-changing pad. This prevents baby from feeling cold.
- Covered pail or trashcan for soiled diapers.
- Vaseline/ barrier/ diaper rash cream. Creams with zinc oxide help prevent diaper rash.
- Washcloths for cleaning baby's bottom.
- Baby wipes (unscented just in case baby's skin is sensitive). Buy these closer to your due date as the wipes may dry out.
- Wipes pop-up container. This allows easy dispensing of wipes (you'll only need one hand). Depending on where you live, you may be also able to purchase a baby wipes warmer which prevents the discomfort of cold, wet wipes.
- Baby powder (optional). Talc is dangerous when inhaled. Use cornstarch-based baby powder instead.

You won't need to buy baby underwear until your child is ready for potty-training.

Suggestions on diapers and diaper-changing

Even parents who swear against disposable diapers may later find them extremely handy, especially for use at night or while travelling. But while disposables help reduce the hassle of diaper washing, exercise care towards how many you buy. The most common mistake new parents make is purchasing a cupboard load of diapers only to find that their newborn is larger than average or that that particular brand gives baby diaper rash.

However, living with a newborn means constant diaper-changing so you also need to be prepared. Considering that most newborns go through about 10 to 12 diapers a day, buy just enough to last you the first week. Or buy a packet each from two different brands to see which suits baby better. You can always buy some more later. Buy one packet of medium-sized diapers too just in case – it won't be a waste because baby will grow very quickly.

Your hospital may provide gift baskets or hampers containing diaper samples. These can be packed conveniently into a diaper bag when you have to bring baby out.

Bath-time

- Clothes hamper for soiled clothes.
- Plastic, non-skid baby bathtub. You may delay buying one if your sink is large enough or if you take baby into the bath with you.
- Facecloths for cleaning baby's face/ body.
- Large cotton bath towels. Experienced mums swear by hooded terry towels for added convenience.
- Baby wash and shampoo (or two-in-ones).
- Baby oil, lotion and/or moisturiser.
- Baby powder (optional).
- Soft-bristled hair brush.
- Nail scissors.
- Cotton buds.

Getting Out and About

- Car seat.
- Receiving blanket and/ or stroller blanket for swaddling baby.
- Stroller that reclines to allow baby to lie flat. Look for the infant-to-toddler variety.
- When you don't bring a stroller, a baby sling or sarong to keep your hands free *and* baby close to the warmth of your chest.

Tips for buying travelling equipment

A car seat is essential as you will need it to bring baby home from the hospital. Look for one that is designed for infants (you can upgrade later as your child grows).

A stroller does not seem like an immediate necessity for a newborn but some mums and dads feel handicapped without it. Babies shouldn't be propped up until they develop strong neck muscles (at about three months) so always choose a stroller that reclines fully. Other musts are wide and stable wheels, adjustable straps and secure seat belt as well as smooth (try it with one hand) steering.

Toys and Soothers

- Story books.
- Mobiles, rattles and squeaking toys.
- CD player, music box or musical aquarium.
- Soft, baby-safe plush toys (e.g. without buttons and scratchy ribbons)
- Pacifiers. Do be aware that if you start baby on a pacifier, it can be difficult to break the habit later!

And if baby falls ill

- Baby thermometer (ear thermometers are easiest with cranky infants).
- Medicine dropper or dispenser meant for babies.
- A mild, non-stinging balm or massage oil suitable for sensitive skin. To massage baby's chest when he has a cold or his belly when he has pain/ gas.

With any balm, apply only a very small amount on baby's skin (away from mouth and eyes). Watch for reactions for at least 24 hours before re-applying