

# Newborn Equipment and Supplies

## Definition

- Babies don't come with owner's manuals. Seek help from reliable sources, like your newborn's doctor and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). AAP website for parents: [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org).
- Babies also don't come with baby equipment. You need to decide what is worth buying with your hard-earned dollars.
- Some baby equipment is essential, some is helpful but not essential, and some is unnecessary.
- These three categories of baby equipment are described in this handout.

## Health Information

### Baby Equipment: What's Essential?

- Well before a baby is born, most parents prepare a special room.
- They buy baby equipment and supplies they think they will need.
- Instead of buying everything you need, you may be able to borrow some baby equipment from friends or relatives or buy it second hand.

**Here is a list of the essential baby items that are discussed in detail in this handout:**

- Car safety seat.
- Crib.
- Sleep clothing.
- Bathtub.
- Bottles and nipples.
- Diapers.
- Diaper bag.
- Pacifier.
- Thermometer.
- Nasal suction device.
- Infant seat.
- Stroller.

## Care Advice

### 1. Car Seats and Safety

- An infant car seat is essential for transporting your baby in a car. They are required by law in all 50 states. You won't be able to leave the hospital and drive home without one.
- All car seats must conform to federal safety standards. They are also ranked by consumer websites.
- For your infant, always install the car seat rear facing and in the back seat. The weight and height limits are found on the safety sticker on the car seat.

## 2. **Cribs and Sleeping**

- Your newborn can sleep in a regular crib or a portable crib (pack and play).
- During the first 4 to 6 months, your baby could also sleep in a bassinet. It offers the advantage of being small, movable, and easily placed next to your bed.
- All cribs must be fitted with a firm, flat mattress, and sheet. The mattress should be the same size as the crib without any gaps.
- To prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), crib safety is very important. The cause of SIDS can be accidental suffocation or unknown. To prevent suffocation, babies need to always be placed in their crib on their back. Tell everyone this rule.
- To also prevent suffocation, none of the following objects should be placed in the crib until after 12 months old: These include pillows, blankets, security objects ("loveys"), stuffed animals and bumper pads.
- Do not use anything that puts your baby at an incline for sleep. These include inclined baby sleepers and positioners.

## 3. **Sleep Clothing for Babies**

- Swaddle sacks keep the arms inside. Swaddle sacks make swaddling simpler than using a blanket. Many babies sleep better when swaddled. They should not be used after 3 months.
- Sleep sacks keep the body warm but allow the arms to be free. They work best when your baby starts trying to roll over and needs to push off with their arms. Sleep sacks allow the legs to move freely within the sack.

## 4. **Bathtubs and Bathing**

- Do sponge baths during the first 2 weeks.
- Once the belly button has healed, you can start doing full baths.
- Baths are only needed once or twice a week.
- Buy a simple baby bathtub that supports your baby's head and back while they sit partially upright.
- Baby baths do not need any soap. Reason: everything on their skin will come off with warm water.
- Before you put your baby in the bath, always test the water temperature by touching it. Be certain it is not too hot for your baby.
- See the Newborn Skin Care handout for details.

## 5. **Bottles and Nipples: Feeding Your Baby**

- If you are feeding your baby formula, you will need about ten bottles.
- With a newborn, it's easiest to start using 4 oz (120 mL) bottles. Reason: babies only take 1-2 ounces (30-60 mL) at a time.
- When your baby is 3 months or so, it's helpful to get 8 oz (240 mL) bottles. Reason: they'll start taking 6-8 ounces (180-240 mL) at a time.
- Plastic bottles are preferred over glass bottles. Reason: they can't break.
- You will also need 5 to 10 nipples.
- For nipples, start with the smallest size to make the flow of the milk from the bottle easy for your baby to swallow. Increase the size of the nipple when it takes them longer than 20 minutes to finish a feed. If you also breastfeed, stay with the newborn nipple size to mimic the flow from breastfeeding.
- Cleaning the bottles and nipples is important. It's helpful to use a brush and drying rack specific for baby bottles. You can also clean bottles and nipples on the top rack of a dishwasher.
- For a healthy baby, regular formula is fine. Special more expensive formulas are not needed.
- See the Bottle-Feeding (Formula) handout for more details on that topic.
- See the 6 Breastfeeding handouts for more details on that topic.
- What is not needed: A bottle warmer is convenient but not required. Babies can drink cold formula too and some prefer it. Caution: Never use a microwave to warm up formula. This can make formula dangerously hot.

## 6. Diapers

- You can choose disposable or cloth diapers. They perform equally for preventing diaper rashes.
- The main advantage of disposable diapers is they are very convenient. They make it easier to travel and childcare centers prefer them. The superabsorbent gel diapers do not leak urine.
- The main disadvantage of disposable diapers is that they are expensive. Find places where you can buy these in bulk.
- Which type of diaper to use can be a difficult decision. Some parents take advantage of both options. They use cloth diapers when at home and disposable diapers when away from home.
- Disposables are helpful when your child has diarrhea because they prevent leakage of watery stools.
- During a baby's first 2 or 3 months of life, when most parents are exhausted by new baby care, consider using a diaper service for cloth diapers rather than washing diapers yourself.
- Diaper rashes are common. See that handout for details.
- What is not needed: Wipe warmers are not needed. Room temperature wipes work just fine.

## 7. Diaper Bag and Bottle Bag

- For traveling outside the home with your baby, you will need to carry the items needed to feed your baby and change diapers.
- Always take diapers, wipes, and a spare set of clothes.
- Bottles, powdered formula, and distilled water will work for feedings.
- Backpacks are more comfortable and convenient than shoulder bags. Some can attach to strollers.

## 8. Pacifiers and Crying

- A pacifier is useful for soothing some babies.
- To prevent choking on the pacifier, the pacifier's shield should be at least 1.5 inches in diameter. The pacifier should be one single piece and not come apart. Some pacifiers are made of silicone (instead of rubber). Silicone lasts longer.
- Newborn pacifiers have a small nipple. The orthodontic-shaped pacifiers are accepted by some older babies but not by others.
- See the Pacifier handout for more details.

## 9. Thermometer

- A rectal thermometer is most helpful if your baby becomes sick.
- The digital all-purpose thermometers that display the temperature in 10 seconds. All-purpose means they can record rectal, oral or armpit temperatures.
- These thermometers cost less than 10 dollars.
- During the first 3 months of life, an accurate rectal temperature reading when your baby feels warm can prevent an unnecessary visit to the ER.

## 10. Nasal Suction Device for Stuffy Noses

- Little nasal passages easily get blocked by nasal mucus (snot). This can cause your baby to have trouble breathing.
- A rubber or silicone suction bulb and nasal saline drops are essential for opening the nose.
- A nasal aspirator (such as a Nose Frida) is a gentler and more effective gadget. It's worth the extra dollars.

### 11. **Infant Seat or Bouncer Seat**

- Infants prefer this inclined position to lying flat. Reason: they can see what is going on around them.
- An infant seat is a good place to keep a young baby when the baby is not eating or sleeping.
- A bouncer seat has the added advantage that your baby can make the seat move on their own.
- Be certain to secure the safety strap.
- Keep seats on the floor and not on high surfaces like tables or counters. Reason: your baby can fall out and hurt themselves.
- After 3 to 4 months old, stop using these seats. Reason: your baby can tip the infant seat over.

### 12. **Strollers and Getting Outdoors**

- Getting out of the home is good for everyone! Babies love being outdoors, and movement is great for the caregiver's return to fitness.
- With your newborn, you can use a bassinet stroller where your baby lies flat. Or some "bucket" car seats snap into a stroller base.
- When your baby grows bigger, then they can fit into a stroller with a seat. When you're out on a stroll, make certain your baby is always strapped in and secure.

### 13. **Helpful But Non-essential Baby Equipment**

- Some of the following items provide your child with forms of transportation or special places to play. They all have some advantages. However, they are not necessary.
- You can carry your child when needed.
- Your child can play on a blanket on the floor.

### 14. **Diaper Changing Table**

- Diapers need to be changed many times a day.
- You can use a bed to change your baby, but bending over the bed so many times a day may cause back strain.
- A regular table or desk covered with a changing pad works better.
- A special baby-changing table will make this task far easier.

### 15. **Swings**

- Swings are entertaining to most babies.
- They can be helpful for calming crying babies.
- Make sure a swing has a sturdy base and crossbars.

### 16. **Front Carrier**

- Cloth carriers that allow you to carry your new baby in front against your chest are great. They must have head support.
- They give your baby a sense of physical contact and warmth.
- They allow you freedom to use your hands.
- Baby slings are different. The AAP recommends avoiding baby slings until 4 months old. Reason: they have caused suffocation in some babies.

### 17. **Backpack Carrier**

- Backpacks are useful for carrying babies who have good head support. That means at least 5 or 6 months old.
- They are an inexpensive way to transport your baby when you go shopping, hiking, or walking.
- The inner seat of the carrier can usually be adjusted to different levels.

## 18. Playpen

- A playpen is a handy and safe place to leave your baby when you need time to focus on work or do chores.
- Babies like playpens because the slatted or mesh sides afford a good view of their surroundings. Playpens can be used both indoors and outdoors.
- Your baby is best introduced to the playpen by the age of 4 months so that she feels good about staying in it. It can be difficult to introduce a baby to a playpen after the baby has learned to crawl.
- Caution: Do not string any objects on a cord across the playpen. Your baby could become entangled in them and strangle.

## 19. Humidifier

- A humidifier is helpful in dry climates or areas with cold winters.
- The ultrasonic humidifiers are quiet and have other advantages.
- Do not buy a vaporizer because the steam it produces could burn a child. Vaporizers also do not deliver humidity at as fast a rate as humidifiers.

## 20. Unnecessary Baby Equipment

Some baby equipment is not worth the investment, but your judgment may be different. Here are some examples:

- **Bathinettes.** You can bathe your baby without a special bathinette.
- **Nursery monitors or intercoms.** These will not prevent crib deaths and may interfere with your baby learning how to comfort himself. It may also cause you unnecessary worries about normal sleep behaviors.
- **Baby carriages or buggies.** These have been replaced by baby strollers, front-carriers, or backpacks.
- **Baby scales.** You can determine if your baby is being fed enough by how many stools they pass.

## Call Your Doctor If

- You have other questions or concerns

### Pediatric Care Advice

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