

BABY CARE



Plan, Plan and Plan Some More

Baby care starts well before birth, and prepared parents often reap the benefits. Preparation is more than having a stockpile of diapers in your nursery, though.

It takes a combination of physical dexterity and mental preparedness to integrate another human being's needs into your daily routine.

So start readying your body, mind and home for the big day when you bring your new baby through those doors.

NESTING: IT IS NORMAL

Nesting is the need to prepare your home for your baby, and it's not just an urge. Research has identified it as a distinguishable instinct within women as they progress through pregnancy.

Life coaches and pregnancy experts urge women to put their to-do lists down on paper. The last thing you need is more stress while you're creating another human being within your body.

Sure, you can probably rattle off countless projects around your home that need to be completed ahead of baby's arrival. Write them down, ask for help from your partner and knock them off your list one by one.

CAR SEAT PREPARATION

The car seat is the one item you need to remember to install before heading to the



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hospital – and it needs to be installed correctly.

According to a recent study, 72 percent of the 3,500 observed car and booster seats were misused in a way that could be expected to increase a child's risk of injury during a crash.

Infants require rear-facing child safety seats in the back

seat of the car buckled with the seat's harness. Consult your car seat manual for installation instructions.

NEW ROUTINE

No matter how many children you already may have in your home, bringing a newborn baby into the mix

makes an impact on everyone. It can also mean big changes for your home routine.

What once was a normal morning, afternoon and night can quickly be turned upside down depending on how quickly your baby adopts a regular sleeping schedule. Prepare yourself by stocking

up on sleep before the big day arrives.

Make sure to complete all of the physical work – preparing the nursery and putting together the furniture – a few months ahead of time so you can devote more time to mental preparation leading up to the birth of your child.

Bonding With Your Baby

The parent-baby bond is a beautiful thing.

It is an emotional connection that can be developed even prior to birth and is one of the greatest joys of being a parent.

It's OK if your first bonding moment doesn't occur from the second you see your baby. Some people take more time to connect with their newborn, and this is a completely natural occurrence.

Here are some quick tips for finding that special moment quickly.

SING A SONG

Why wait for the baby to get here? Playing music or singing songs to your baby while he or she is in the womb can help you connect with your baby. You may even notice an increase in your baby's movement while you perform.

JUMP RIGHT IN

Whether you're a single parent, a new dad or mother of many, one of the keys to bonding with your new baby is being proactive and enthusiastic when you take care of routine tasks like diaper changes or baths.

Talk and coo with your baby while you complete these duties instead of complaining or passing them off to your partner.

SPEND ONE-ON-ONE TIME

While it is important for parents to be a team, giving your child individual attention can help enhance the bonding experience.

Find something that you like to do that is baby-friendly and enjoy some one-on-one time with your newest addition.

LAUGH ... A LOT

Babies are naturally funny. They sneeze, stretch and make interesting faces that make you feel like they know something you don't.

Laugh often with your baby when he or she does something humorous. It will help you connect and can be a positive source of comfort for your baby.



When to Call the Doctor

Whether you're a new or experienced parent, it can be challenging to determine when to call your newborn's pediatrician.

You don't want to overreact to every single indication of baby discomfort, but you don't want to under-react if there is the chance of a serious health issue.

When trying to assess your newborn's health, it is important to remain calm. Remember, your emotions are probably still out of whack from childbirth or lack of sleep, so consult an outside opinion if you feel underprepared to handle the situation. And always trust your instincts.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The American Academy of Pediatrics urges you to call the doctor if your baby has any of the following symptoms:

- No urine during the first 24 hours at home or no bowel movements in the first 48
- Rapid breathing of more than 60 breaths per minute or blue lips/fingernails
- Rectal temperature above 100.4 degrees or below 97.8 degrees
- Persistent coughs or nosebleeds
- Yellow or green mucus in the eyes
- Red skin at the base of the umbilical cord
- Yellow color in the whites of the eye or skin (jaundice) that worsens three days after birth
- Heavy bleeding at the circumcision site
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Fewer than six wet diapers over 24 hours
- A sunken soft spot on the baby's head
- Fussy eating or refusal to eat
- Extreme, twitchy movements
- Crying more often and intense than usual



Dealing with Eczema

It doesn't seem fair that a newborn baby would have to deal with itchy red skin. But one out of 10 babies suffers from eczema, according to kidshealth.org.

Eczema is defined as a chronic skin condition that usually starts within the first five years of life and typically lasts into adolescence. Studies have shown that the condition tends to be more common in families that have a history of eczema, hay fever and asthma.

THE SIGNS

In young babies, eczema is most identifiable on the cheeks, forehead and scalp, according to the National Eczema Association.

Small bumps are usually indicators of eczema and can form into a rash that may spread to the arms, legs and stomach.

Once you recognize the signs, you can create a plan of action for taking care of eczema.

WHAT CAUSES ECZEMA?

Doctors and scientists believe that eczema is inherited, but there are some factors that can increase the condition's severity.

Eczema flare-ups occur in the occurrence of very dry skin, contact with irritating substances or skin infection.

You may notice that your baby's eczema is more promi-



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nent during the winter. This is due to the air being drier during the colder months. Another regular cause of eczema in babies is from drooling that may cause additional irritation.

Common ointments can help decrease skin redness

and rawness, as can avoiding certain triggers like pets, carpet, dust mites, cigarette smoke and scented products.

TREATMENTS

Watching your baby deal

with itchy, red skin can be difficult. Luckily, there are steps you can follow to alleviate some of your baby's irritation.

The National Eczema Association recommends daily bathing in warm water without bubble bath, salts or

other additives.

Avoid scrubbers and rough washcloths, as well, that can create more harm than good when dealing with sensitive skin.

Shortly after bathing your baby, apply a moisturizer to the skin.

Avoiding Heatstroke

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children, and many of these cases involve the unthinkable tragedy of a child dying after being forgotten inside a hot car.

Even temperatures in the 60s can cause the temperature inside a car to reach more than 110 degrees, according to SafeCar.gov.

Leaving your newborn alone in a car for a minute or two can have drastic impacts on his or her body temperature. Not to mention, the act is illegal in many states.

Many cases of death or serious injury occur when a parent simply forgets that their child is still in the car – distracted by errands or a phone call. The end result can be tragic.

REMAIN VIGILANT

Nearly 40 children die every year from heat-related deaths in hot cars, according to Kids and Cars, a national association focused on preventing such tragedies.

The key to reducing the number of deaths comes down to parent vigilance. Never leave your children alone in or around cars, even as they grow out of infant stage.

You should also get into the habit of visually checking all aspects of your vehicle when you arrive somewhere instead of simply hurrying into the store or business. Do so for other cars, too. And if you spot a strapped-in child with no adult supervision, call 911 immediately.

TIPS

Getting used to a new routine can take time. Implement some of these ideas to keep your child car-safe.

- Place a large stuffed animal in your car seat when your baby is not in it. Then move the animal to the front seat when you place your baby in the seat. This will serve as a visual reminder to you that your baby is in the car with you.
- Put something you'll need like your phone, purse or brief case in the back seat next to your car seat. This will provide a memory trigger that you are traveling with your newborn when you reach destinations.
- Maintain routine communications with your spouse after dropping off your baby at daycare or the babysitter's house. Many car-related child deaths have occurred when a parent has skipped the drop-off site and pulled in to work, only to realize hours later that they forgot their child in the car.



Using Your Support System

Adding a newborn will bring supporters out of the woodwork. Use them! There is nothing wrong with asking for help in caring for your newborn.

You likely earned little rest in the hospital after your bundle of joy arrived. And coming home is a whirlwind of new responsibilities, altered living arrangements and stress over keeping your baby safe.

If you are lucky enough to have nearby parents, family members or friends willing to offer a helping hand, their support can be one of the biggest factors in you fully recovering from the exhaustion that generally accompanies a new baby.

SLEEP IS CRUCIAL

Family members and friends who are willing to work a night shift or two in the first few days of your baby's life can seem like a family miracle. Don't be afraid to ask. They are likely to be smitten with your new family addition and are probably more than excited to spend as much time possible with him or her.

Even a few hours in the late evening may help you catch up on sleep. Figure out a schedule before giving birth so all of your volunteers know the plan ahead of time.

USE THEIR EXPERIENCE

Mother-in-laws are notori-



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ous for having child-rearing opinions, stories and battle-tested experience. Use them all to your advantage.

For new parents, especially, bringing home a child is comparable to entering a whole new galaxy, full of sleepless nights, crying fits and dirty

diapers.

Let your more experienced family members walk you back into reality with regular visits and offers of assistance.

FREE MEALS

The last thing you want to

worry about when holding your precious baby is cooking dinner.

Many people figure that bringing over a meal to help with your exciting and stressful return home is the least they can do – and they are usually staunch in their refus-

al to accept any money from you in return.

Taking advantage of their generosity does not make you a bad friend or family member. So put down your wallet and pick up your fork. You're going to need the energy.

Tips for the Perfect Swaddle

An effective trick for many parents, pulling off a good swaddle may take a little time. But the end result is often a happy, sleeping baby.

One reason swaddling works so effectively is that it recreates the coziness of the womb. A nice, comfortable swaddle can keep your baby warm and relaxed, resulting in a longer, deeper sleep.

As with most baby-related activities, always use extra precaution when swaddling your baby. Using too tight of a swaddle can increase the risk of overheating or respiratory infection, according to the Mayo Clinic.

It can also prevent babies from being able to move their hips or knees up and down. This can negatively impact joints and or cause hip dislocations.

HOW TO DO IT

The swaddle technique is an easy one to master. Follow these tips:

- Completely spread out a large, thin blanket and fold over one corner
- Place your baby face up with the head at the edge of the folded corner of the blanket
- Bring one corner over your baby and tuck it underneath the body
- Fold up the bottom point of the blanket loosely to leave room for your baby's feet and legs to move
- Bring the other corner over your baby and tuck it underneath the body
- Lay your baby on his or her back and watch the swaddle work to perfection

MEDICAL RESEARCH

New research shows that swaddling may protect babies from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), which is linked to about 2,500 baby deaths every year.

A study conducted in Belgium recently claimed that swaddling can help infants sleep better on their back but can cause them to startle easier and more often.

Make sure to use a thin receiving blanket to keep your baby from overheating, and check on your infant regularly during naps or nighttime to ensure their safety.

