



Parenting an Infant

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Introduction

Congratulations! You're a new parent. Suddenly you're responsible for a brand new, tiny human being—one who depends on you for every need. Becoming a parent is a transition like no other. It can be a little scary, but mostly it will fill you with joy and awe.

This handbook will help guide you through those first months of parenthood. You'll find information to help you with the practical aspects of caring for your baby as well as advice on how to support yourself emotionally while you give your child the best possible start in life. Download and save this handbook so you can fill in the charts online.



1. Developmental Milestones

Every baby is different but most do the same types of things by certain ages. At well-baby checkups, talk with your pediatrician about how your child is growing and developing to make sure they are on track. The following charts of predictable milestones will help you gauge your baby's development.

At two months, my baby:	Yes or No
Is starting to smile and trying to look at people	
Turns their head toward sounds	
Makes cooing sounds	
Holds their head up	
Pushes up when lying on their tummy	

At four months, my baby:	Yes or No
Copies facial expressions	
Smiles at people	
Enjoys playing with people	
Reaches for a toy	
Pushes down on their legs when their feet are on a hard surface	
Holds and shakes a toy	

At six months, my baby:	Yes or No
Recognizes familiar faces and knows when someone is a stranger	
Looks at their reflection in mirror	
Strings vowels together and takes turns making sounds	
Brings objects to their mouth	
Tries to get things that are out of reach	
Is beginning to sit without support	
Rocks back and forth on their hands and knees	

At nine months, my baby:	Yes or No
Can be clingy with familiar adults	
Understands the word "no"	
Makes lots of different sounds	
Copies sounds and gestures of others	
Uses their finger to point	
Plays peek-a-boo	
Picks up small objects between their index finger and thumb	
Pulls to a standing position	
Crawls	

At one year, my baby:	Yes or No
Cries when a parent leaves	
Puts out their arm or leg to help with dressing	
Hands us a book to hear a story	
Shakes their head "no," waves "bye-bye"	
Says "mama" and "dada"	
Is starting to use things correctly—drinks from a cup and uses a hairbrush	
Walks holding onto furniture	



2. Baby Essentials

Although your baby will be content with warm clothes, a full belly and a clean diaper, you'll probably want to stock up on a few items to help make your life a little easier. The cost of baby gear can add up, so be willing to accept hand-me-downs. You can also find good deals at consignment and thrift stores. Just be sure that the equipment and clothing meets safety standards. Check the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) for safety recalls. When making a baby shower registry, stick to the necessities. Friends and family can go in together for costly items like a stroller, crib or car seat. Request larger sized diapers so you don't end up with too many newborn diapers.

Baby gear checklist

The following list of supplies will keep your baby healthy and happy.

Clothing	✓
Infant bodysuits or rompers	
Sleepwear, including a blanket sleeper for cold weather (if needed)	
Baby socks	
Hats for warmth and for sun protection	

Baby Care	✓
Receiving blankets	
Diapers	
Baby wipes	
Diaper rash cream	
Digital rectal thermometer	
Baby bathtub or insert for your regular tub	
Baby shampoo and body wash	
Baby lotion	
Hooded baby towels, or soft regular towels	
Baby washcloths, or soft regular washcloths	
Baby nail clippers	
Nasal aspirator	
Infant acetaminophen drops	
Pacifiers	

Nursery Basics	✓
Crib or bassinet with mattress	
Crib bedding	
Waterproof mattress pad	
Mobile to hang over the crib	
Changing station with changing pad and covers	
Diaper pail	
Dresser	
Hamper	

Feeding Needs	✓
Breast pump	
Freezer storage containers for breast milk	
Bottles and nipples	
Bottle brush	
Bottle drying rack	
Bibs	
High chair	

Travel Gear	✓
Diaper bag	
Diaper changing pad	
Infant car seat	
Infant carrier or sling	
Stroller	
Bibs	
Portable crib	

Entertainment Needs	✓
Bouncer	
Play mat or play gym	
Swing	
Infant toys, such as stuffed toys, rattles and teethingers. These should not have small parts that your baby could choke on.	
Books	

Safety Items	✓
Baby monitor	
Baby gates	
Outlet plugs	



Choose a carryall that's sturdy and comfortable to manage. Stock it well!

Diaper Bag Checklist	✓
Diapers. Figure one for every two hours you will be out and then two more for good measure.	
Wipes. These are good not only for baby's bottom, but also to wipe hands and to clean up messes.	
Small tube of diaper rash ointment	
Compact, foldable changing pad	
Change of clothes	
Two burp cloths (more if your baby is prone to spitting up)	
Light blanket that can be used to block the sun, cover baby in a cold building and for discrete breast-feeding	
Several plastic bags for used diapers or soiled clothes	
Favorite book or toy	
Bottles and formula for feeding, if appropriate	
Extra formula and sterilized or bottled water	
Two bibs	
Two pacifiers (if your child uses them)	
Small first aid kit that also includes emergency numbers	

Be sure to budget for other immediate and future expenses such as medical care, extra laundry costs, child care if needed, legal fees to change your will, education, etc.

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3. Breastfeeding

Breast milk is the perfect food for your baby. It contains the right amount of protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamins and minerals. It doesn't require preparation, is always with you and doesn't cost anything. With that said, be aware that breastfeeding doesn't always come naturally to mother or baby. If you're having trouble with breastfeeding, ask your pediatrician to put you in touch with a lactation specialist or get in touch with the [La Leche League](#) for advice. With practice, you and your baby should become pros at breastfeeding.

Learning to breastfeed

Here are some suggestions to help you along the way:

- Learn your baby's hunger signs. Some common signs of hunger are:
 - Becoming more alert and active
 - Putting hand or fist to mouth
 - Making sucking motions with mouth
 - Turning the head when something touches the baby's cheek. This is called "rooting."
 - Crying
- Help your baby finish the first breast, as long as they are still sucking and swallowing. This will ensure the baby gets the "hind" milk—the fattier milk at the end of a feeding. Offer the other breast if they seem to want more.
- Keep your baby close to you. Being skin to skin helps babies cry less and stabilizes the baby's heart and breathing rates.
- Avoid nipple confusion. Avoid using pacifiers, bottles and supplements of infant formula in the first few weeks unless there is a medical reason to do so.
- Sleep safely and close by. Have your baby sleep in a crib or bassinet in your room, so that you can breastfeed more easily at night. Sharing a room with parents is linked to a lower risk of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
- Know when to wake the baby. In the early weeks after birth, wake your baby to feed if four hours have passed since the beginning of the last feeding. Some tips for waking the baby include:
 - changing your baby's diaper
 - placing your baby skin to skin
 - massaging your baby's back, abdomen, and legs

If your baby is falling asleep at the breast during most feedings, talk to the baby's doctor about a weight check. Also, see a lactation consultant to make sure the baby is latching on well.

4. Sleep

One of the biggest challenges facing new parents is adjusting to the lack of sleep. Newborn babies sleep up to 18 hours a day, but rarely for more than a few hours at a time. That's because they can't hold much food in their tiny bellies and wake up to nurse. Breastfed babies feed eight to 12 times a day while babies who drink formula can go a little longer between feedings. This won't last forever. Your baby should start sleeping for longer stretches starting at around two months old.

Seven way to help your baby sleep

1. Keep naptime consistent.
2. Establish a regular nighttime routine. This may include a bath, feeding, a story or song, then bedtime.
3. Feed your baby just before bed.
4. Swaddle your baby before sleep to allow them to feel the comforts of the womb.
5. Try to put the baby to bed drowsy but awake—this can help them learn to soothe themselves.
6. When your baby wakes in the middle of the night, keep the lights off during feeding and keep lights low for diaper changes.
7. Keep talking and singing to a minimum during nighttime feeding. This will help your baby understand that nighttime is for sleeping and daytime is for playing and interacting.

Preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Research shows that there are several ways to reduce the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death:

- Place your baby on their back to sleep.
- Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib, covered by a fitted sheet.
- Have your baby sleep in your room, but not in your bed. Use a bassinet or crib.
- Keep soft objects, toys, crib bumpers and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area.
- Do not smoke, drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.
- Breastfeed your baby.
- Give your baby a pacifier that is not attached to a string for naps and at night.
- Do not let your baby get too hot during sleep.
- Follow your health care provider's guidance on your baby's vaccines and regular health checkups.

Source: www.cdc.gov/sids/Parents-Caregivers.htm

5. Choosing a Pediatrician

The pediatrician will care for your baby throughout childhood, so it's worth spending time selecting the right one for your family. Ask friends, relatives and your obstetrician for referrals. You can also use this [search tool](#) from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Make sure the pediatrician you choose is covered by your insurance plan.

Considerations

While making the decision, consider the following:

- Are you more comfortable with a younger or older doctor?
- Do you prefer a male or female doctor?
- How far are you willing to travel for appointments?
- Are the office hours convenient for you?
- Do you prefer a pediatrician with a solo or a group practice?

Assessing the office environment

You'll want to feel comfortable in the setting and confident in the office staff. Use the chart below to record your impressions of the office and staff during your first visit.

Name of Pediatrician: _____	Your Comments
Impressions of staff's friendliness and professionalism	
Cleanliness of waiting area	
Availability of toys and activities	
Number of people waiting. Is it crowded?	
Is there a separate area for sick children?	
How long was the wait before seeing the doctor?	

Questions to ask the pediatrician

You may only have a few minutes to speak with the pediatrician, so use your instincts when evaluating the doctor. The doctor should answer your questions thoughtfully and with patience. Use the spaces in the chart below to record the doctor's answers to your questions.

Name of Pediatrician: _____	Your Comments
How do I reach you after hours if there is an emergency?	
Who covers for you during weekends, evenings and days off?	
What hospital do you admit patients to?	
How are emergency visits handled? Do you have someone covering for you when you are not available?	
Who handles phone calls when the office is closed or during vacations?	
What is your policy on taking phone calls during office hours? Is a nurse available to answer my questions?	
Do you focus on disease prevention and in what major ways?	
What is your philosophy about breastfeeding?	
What breastfeeding support do you offer?	
How will you monitor my baby's development?	
Will you be comfortable talking with my child about tough issues in the future when they enter the teenage years?	

6. Taking Care of Yourself

Taking care of a newborn can be emotionally and physically exhausting. You're dealing with interrupted sleep, postpartum changes in your body and the round-the-clock demands of an infant. This is the time to relax your standards about just about everything in your life except for you and your baby. Here are some ways to focus on the essentials:

Ask for help

- Take turns with your partner to share some of the responsibility. Your partner can change the diaper after you have fed the baby, for example.
- Ask a family member or friend to help with household chores or to watch the baby while you sleep.
- Hire help if you can afford to. You might bring in someone to clean the house once a week, or send the laundry out to a cleaner instead of doing it yourself.

Eat right

You may feel too tired to bother with good nutrition—or to eat at all. But you need healthy food to keep up your energy, particularly if you're breastfeeding.

- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Drink low-fat or fat-free milk or calcium-fortified soy milk.
- Eat whole grains and lean proteins, such as beans, nuts, lean beef, lamb and pork.
- Drink plenty of water. Keep a bottle with you at all times to remind you to stay hydrated.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol, particularly if you are breastfeeding because they will pass from your bloodstream into your breast milk.

To take the guesswork out of eating right, the United States Department of Agriculture offers a [personalized food plan](#) for breastfeeding moms.

Get rest

A good night's sleep may seem like a far-off dream, but it will happen again. In the meantime, here are some tips:

- Sleep when the baby sleeps. Don't worry about chores. Take a nap whenever you can.
- Have your baby sleep in your room to make nighttime feedings easier (and to help guard against SIDS).
- Don't feel obligated to entertain visitors. People will want to see your new baby. Nobody expects a clean house or to be waited on. You might even put visitors to work, doing dishes, folding laundry or watching the baby while you take a quick nap.

Stay active

Even though you're tired, doing something you enjoy that gets you moving will boost your mood and your energy level.

- Speak with your health care provider before starting an exercise routine. Pregnancy and child birth causes changes that must be taken into account before doing certain exercises.
- Get outside every day, if possible. Combine fresh air and exercise by pushing your baby in the stroller
- Do something active and that you enjoy every day. Just be careful not to overdo it while your body is returning to its pre-pregnancy state.



Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

KidsHealth
<https://kidshealth.org/>

La Leche League
www.llli.org

Zero to three
www.Zerotothree.org



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