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What you need for your baby

It can be easy to get confused about what you really need for your baby. You can always ask your midwife or health visitor for advice on what to buy, and you may be given a list of essentials at your antenatal classes or by your maternity service. There are some essentials that every new mother needs, as well as extras that you might want to think about. There is extensive marketing and a wide range of products available for infants and babies. It is not essential to have all of these items and remember babies grow out of things very quickly. You may be able to borrow some items, and then pass them on later to another mother or keep them for a second child.

Nappies

Cloth nappies

Washable cloth nappies are cheaper than disposable nappies, even when you take into account the cost of washing them at home or getting them washed by a laundry service. They are more environmentally friendly and are easily laundered in a 60°C wash. You can get shaped cloth nappies with Velcro or popper fastenings and waterproof wraps.

For cloth nappies, you will need:

- nappy pins for nappies without Velcro or fasteners;
- nappy liners – either disposable or cloth, which you can wash and use again;
- a bucket with a lid and nappy sterilising powder or liquid for sterilising nappies;

- about four pairs of plastic pants that are either tie-on or elasticated. Tie-on ones will fit small babies better. Some cloth nappies have the waterproof wraps attached.

Nappy services

Nappy laundry services deliver freshly laundered nappies to your home and take away the soiled ones to wash each week.

They supply everything you need – wraps, liners and storage bins. Ask your health visitor or check online for local services.

Disposable nappies

Disposable nappies are convenient to use and are available from supermarkets and other retail outlets.

Nappy changing

To change nappies, you will need:

- white cotton wool, for washing and drying - rolls are usually cheaper than



balls, or plain water wipes if preferred although these will be more expensive;

- a changing mat;
- container for plain water;
- a bag to carry all the nappy-changing equipment when you go out - a carrier bag will do but you can get special bags that include a changing mat.

Safety

The safest place to change a nappy is on a mat on the floor. If you use a higher surface, keep your hand on your baby at all times to stop them rolling off. See page 169 for how to change your baby's nappy.



Bathing

It is a personal choice how frequently you bathe your baby; a wash will often be enough to keep your baby clean and ensure they are comfortable. Some babies enjoy the bath and for some a warm bath may help them to sleep.



You will need:

- A baby bath or any large, clean bowl.
- Two towels, the softer the better. Keep them only for your baby's use. There is no need for special baby towels, unless you want them.

Washing your baby with just plain water is recommended for the first month. See page 172 for how to bathe your baby.

Sleeping

For the first few months, you will need a crib, a carry cot or a moses basket (a light, portable bassinet).

Your baby needs somewhere to sleep that is flat, safe and warm and not too far away from you. If you are borrowing a crib or cot, or if you have one that has been used by another of your children, you will need a new mattress.

The baby on the left is sleeping in the 'feet to foot' position (also see page 168). This means that the baby's feet are right at the end of the cot to prevent the baby wriggling under the covers and overheating.





You will also need:

- A firm mattress that fits the cot snugly without leaving space round the edges so that your baby cannot trap their head and suffocate.
- Sheets to cover the mattress. You need at least four because they need to be changed often. Fitted sheets make life easy but they are quite expensive.

- Light blankets for warmth. Specially designed sleeping bags are useful for babies who are kicking off their blankets. However if using check the weight and size of the sleeping bag is suitable for your baby. Make sure it is fitted with neck and armholes, and no hood.

Reducing the risk of sudden infant death

Sudden infant death that remains unexplained is very rare. An infant is at higher risk of sudden infant death during sleep.

The safest place for your baby to sleep is on their back in a Moses basket or cot in your room for the first six months.

Never sleep with your baby on an armchair or sofa. Never allow your baby to share a bed with anyone who has been smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking drugs including prescription medication.

Sleeping with your baby can be risky especially if you are not breastfeeding. Speak to your midwife, health visitor, family nurse or GP if you need more information about reducing the risk of sudden infant death, or if you feel strongly that you wish your baby to sleep with you instead of in a cot or Moses basket. For more detailed information on sudden infant death see page 166.

Do

- Put your baby to sleep in a Moses basket or cot in your room for the first six months.
- Place your baby to sleep on their back in the 'feet to foot' position (feet touching the bottom of the cot).
- Use a light blanket firmly tucked no higher than the baby's shoulders.
- Use a clean, firm, well-fitting, waterproof mattress.
- If using a baby sleeping bag, make sure it is fitted with neck and armholes, and no hood.
- Breastfeed if you can, and put your baby back to sleep in their cot after feeding.

Don't

- Sleep with your baby on an armchair or sofa.
- Allow your baby to sleep alone in an adult bed.
- Allow your baby to share a bed with anyone who has been smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs (including prescription medication) or is feeling overly tired.
- Cover your baby's head.
- Allow anyone to smoke around your baby.
- Allow your baby to become overheated.
- Leave your baby sleeping in a car seat for long periods or when not travelling in the car.
- Put pillows, loose blankets, cot bumpers or sleep positioners in your baby's cot.

Immunisation reduces the risk of sudden infant death. For more information about immunisation, visit pha.site/immunisation-and-vaccinations

Cot safety

Your baby will spend many hours alone in a cot, so make sure it's safe. It is recommended that a new cot mattress is got for each baby.

- The mattress must fit snugly with no space for your baby's head to get stuck.
- The bars must be smooth and securely fixed, and the distance between each bar should be not less than 1 inch (25mm) and not more than 2½ inches (60mm) so that your baby's head cannot become trapped.
- The cot should be sturdy.
- The moving parts should work smoothly so that fingers or clothing cannot get trapped.
- Infants should never sleep using a Babocush, pillows, wedges, Poddle Pods, bedding rolls, bumpers or duvets.
- Never leave anything with ties – for example, bibs or clothes – in the cot in case they get caught around your baby's neck.
- Do not hang toys or objects that could be hazardous on the cot or bed.
- If you are buying a new cot, look for the British Standard mark BS 1753.

Blind cord safety

Looped cords such as blind cords and chains can pose a risk to small children. Research indicates that most accidental deaths involving blind cords happen in the bedroom and occur in children between 16 months and 36 months, with the majority happening at around 23 months.

Making it safe

To reduce the risk posed by looped cords, including blind cords, cords should be kept out of the reach of children.

Install blinds that do not have a cord, particularly in a child's bedroom.

Do not place a child's cot, bed, playpen or highchair near a window.

Pull cords on curtains and blinds should be kept short and out of reach of children.

Tie up the cords or use one of the many cleats, cord tidies or clips that are available.





Out and about

Spend some time looking at what is available for getting around with your baby. Think about what will suit you best. Always choose transport that allows your baby to face you and not forward to ensure you can communicate with the baby when out. You could always ask other mothers what they have found useful.

A baby sling or carrier lets you hold your baby close. Slings that use knots or rings to hold the two ends of the fabric pose a safety risk because the knots can loosen or the fabric can slip through the rings, causing your baby to fall.

- Choose a carrier that fits you and your baby. A sling should be tight enough to keep your baby close to your body.
- Your baby's face should be easily visible.



- Your baby should be close enough to kiss the top their head.
- Make sure there is a gap, at least one finger width between your baby's chin and chest so your baby can breathe easily.
- The baby's back should be supported in its natural position with the tummy and chest against you.
- Choose a carrier that comes with detailed, easy to follow instructions and follow them carefully.
- Be cautious when bending over while wearing the carrier. Hold onto the baby with one hand and bend at the knees.
- Don't cook with the baby in the carrier. Your baby could get burnt.

Pushchairs are only suitable for young babies if they have fully reclining seats that let your baby lie flat. Wait until your baby can sit up before using any other type of pushchair. You should also consider the weight of the pushchair if you use public transport as you might have to lift it onto trains or buses.

Prams give your baby a lot of space to sit and lie comfortably, although they take up a lot of space and are hard to use on public transport. If you have a car, look for a pram that can be

dismantled easily. Buy a pram harness at the same time, as you will soon need it.

Carrycot on wheels. Your baby can sleep in the carrycot for the first few months and the cot can be attached to the frame to go out. It can also be taken in a car with appropriate restraints.

Three-in-one. This is a carrycot and transporter (set of wheels) that can be converted into a pushchair when your baby outgrows the carrycot.

Shopping trays that fit under the pushchair or pram can be very useful when you are out.

Before buying a pushchair or pram, check that:

- baby can face you at all times;
- the brakes are in good working order;
- the handles are at the right height for pushing, and;
- the frame is strong enough.



In the car

If you have a car, you must have a car seat. This is also called a safety restraint. Your baby must

always go in their seat, including when you bring them home from the hospital. It's very dangerous – and illegal – to carry your baby in your arms. The best way for your baby to travel is in a rear-facing infant car seat, on either the front or back seat. This is held in place by the adult safety belt.

If you have a car with air bags in the front, your baby should not travel in the front seat, even if they are facing backwards, because of the danger of suffocation if the bag inflates.

To keep your baby as safe as possible:

- Make sure the car seat is fitted correctly.
- Do not place a rear-facing infant car seat in the front passenger seat if your car is fitted with an air bag.
- Don't buy a second-hand car seat as it may have been damaged in an accident.
- Look for United Nations ECE Regulation number R44.03, or a later version of this standard, when you buy a car seat. This is the standard for new seats. However, if you have car seats that conform to a British Standard or to an earlier version of R44, you can continue to use them.

Feeding

If you are going to breastfeed,

you will probably want:

- Nursing bras that open at the front and have adjustable straps. Cotton is best because it allows air to circulate. If you try on bras at about 36–38 weeks, they should fit when you need them.
- Breast pads. You put these into your bra to prevent milk from leaking onto your clothes.

If you are going to formula feed, you will need:

- Six bottles with teats and caps.
- Sterilising equipment.
- A bottle brush.
- Infant formula milk. Avoid buying this too far in advance, as infant formula milk has a 'use by date' printed on the package.

See chapter 10 for how to feed your baby.

Clothes

There is extensive marketing and a wide range of products available for infants and babies. It is not essential to have all of these items and remember babies grow out of things very quickly. All you need for the first



few weeks are enough clothes to make sure that your baby will be warm and clean. You will probably need:

- Six stretch suits for both day and night.
- Two cardigans. They should be wool or cotton rather than nylon, and light rather than heavy. Several light layers of clothing are best for keeping your baby warm.
- Six vests.
- A shawl or blanket to wrap your baby in.
- A woollen or cotton hat, mittens and socks or booties for going out if the weather is cold. It's better to choose close-knitted patterns for safety.
- A sun hat for going out if the weather is hot or the sun is bright.



Washing baby clothes

If you use a washing machine, don't use washing powders with enzymes (bio powders) or fabric conditioner, as they may irritate your baby's skin. Always rinse clothes very thoroughly.