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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.

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 unexpected death in infancy

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

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.



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.

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.

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 used 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 cushioned sleeping pods, nests, baby hammocks or cot bumpers.
- Never leave anything with ties – for example, bibs or

Do

- Put your baby to sleep in a cot or moses basket in the same room as you for the first six months.
- Always place your baby on their back to sleep.
- Place your baby in the 'feet to foot' position (with their feet touching the end of the cot, moses basket, or pram).
- Keep your baby's head uncovered – use a light blanket firmly tucked no higher than the baby's shoulders.
- Use a mattress that's firm, flat, waterproof and in good condition.
- Breastfeed your baby (if you can) and put your baby back to sleep in their cot after feeding.
- Make sure, if using a baby sleeping bag, it is fitted with neck and armholes, and no hood.

Don't

- Sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby.
- 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 or is feeling overly tired.
- Cover your baby's head.
- Smoke during pregnancy or let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby (both before and after birth).
- Let your baby get overheated, light bedding or a lightweight baby sleeping bag will provide a comfortable sleeping environment for your baby.
- 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.

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 Safety Standard BS1877-10:2011.
- If you are buying a new mattress look for British Safety Standard BS 1877-10: 2011.

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.

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.



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 your child travels in a car they are required by law to travel in an appropriate child car seat until they are 12 years old or 135cm tall, whichever comes first.

There are a few different types of seat that will be suitable for your new born baby, the most commonly used are infant carriers, which have a carry handle and can be easily removed from the car, however some seats that are fixed in the vehicle will also be suitable.

Currently there are two safety regulations that seats sold in the UK must comply with. ECE **R44/04**, which is height based and the more recent **R129** or “**i-Size**” which is weight based. The best seat for your baby is one that gives a solid installation in the vehicle that it is intended to be used in AND gives a good fit for baby.

Important points to consider when choosing your baby's seat:

- Rear-facing is the safest way to travel for all young children, preferably until **at least** age four.
- Seat belt installation is just as safe as ISOFix, provided it is installed correctly. Always

check the manual that comes with your child seat and ensure the retailer shows you how to install it correctly.

- **Never** buy a second hand seat, it may have been in an accident and would not protect your baby in any future accident.
- Be aware of a seats weight and height restrictions. A seat must **never** be used beyond the manufacturers stated limits, this will be shown on the orange label attached to the seat. I-Size infant carriers can have different height limits, check the seat before you buy it, a bigger height limit means the seat will last longer before being outgrown.
- Although it is still legal to use seats tested to R44/03 standard (but not to sell) it is not recommended. R44/03 seats could be up to 25 years old and although seats do not have an expiry date the materials can degrade over time. Manufactures recommend 6-10 years of use before a seat should be replaced. This also allows for advances in safety.

Important safety considerations:

- Babies should not be in their car seat for extended periods of time, **maximum 30 minutes for very young babies**. This is because

their neck muscles are not developed enough to support their heads and the upright position of the seat can lead to breathing difficulties if in this position for a long time.

- Head flop is dangerous in babies under six months as it can affect breathing.
- It is **illegal**, and very dangerous, to put a rear facing seat in the front seat of a car with an active airbag. Some cars come with the function to deactivate the airbag (usually with the vehicle key) or your car dealership may be able to do this, check your vehicle manual. Your vehicle manual will also tell you which seat positions can be used for different child restraints. Always check the manufacturers website to ensure that the seat is compatible for the vehicle it is to be used in.
- **Never** add anything to your car seat that has not been crash tested, as it may affect how your seat preforms in an accident.
- **Never** place a baby/child in a car seat with thick clothes on, as they can affect how well the harness hugs the body. Always layer blankets over the harness to keep baby warm and remove if needed, young babies can overheat easily.
- Never leave your baby/child

unattended in the car. Cars can get very hot very quickly and children can die in hot cars.

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.

