

# Baby Care



# Stocking the Nursery

Congratulations! You're going to have a baby! If it's your first or even if it's been a few years since you last heard the pitter patter of little feet, you may need some extra help deciding what goes in your nursery.

That's OK, we're here to help in the overwhelming baby aisle.

## SLEEPING

You're going to need a crib, of course, no matter how tiny your little bean looks inside. It's the safest place for them to sleep, Consumer Reports says, because they're regulated by the government.

While it may be tempting to go for the price points of a used crib, new is best.

Consumer Reports points out that, by buying new, you get the crib with the latest safety standards. The magazine recommends a Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association-certified crib with stationary sides. You'll also want to buy the mattress at the same time, making sure it's a full-sized mattress and a tight fit inside the crib. Consumer Reports says to check using two fingers. If you can put more than two fingers between the mattress and the



© ADOBE STOCK

crib frame, it's too loose.

## SWADDLING BLANKETS

There is no such thing as too many swaddling blankets. Swaddling is an age-old method for calming a baby by wrapping them into a snugly, warm burrito. It also prevents them from flailing and triggering their startle reflex

(which will wake them up. Rule No. 1 of having a baby: Don't. Wake. The. Baby.). It also helps them regulate their temperature until they can do so on their own.

You can use flat swaddling blankets or, for the clumsier of us, swaddle wraps with Velcro tabs or zippers. Make sure that, whatever you use,

the swaddle blanket is kept tight. If the blanket is too loose or comes unwrapped, it could cover baby's face and cause them to have trouble breathing.

## DIAPERS

You're going to go through a lot – let's say it again, a lot – of diapers. Until you meet your

new little one, don't be loyal to just one brand or size. Every bum is different, and you may find that what worked for your best friend's baby or even one of your own children before doesn't work for this one. Keep the receipts or look to trade with other new parents if you have a glut of diapers that don't fit.



# Five Great Baby Shower Gifts

If you're looking to rock the socks off the stork, then throw a great baby shower, complete with the best shower gifts ever.

Of course, it's always a good idea to follow the new parents' registries, but, if you don't have access to those or want to go your own way, here are some great ideas that work for just about everyone who's expecting.

## GIFT CERTIFICATES

Gift cards to grocery stores, to restaurants for take out or delivery, to baby stores or to all of the above fit just about anyone's bill. For a creative idea, create a bouquet of gift cards with a sense of humor. One to a coffee shop for lugging yourself to work after long nights, one to a restaurant for dinner, one to the local grocery for middle-of-the-night diapers and one to the pharmacy for 1 a.m. diaper cream purchases.

## TOYS, TOYS, TOYS

Playmats, rattles, stuffies and more! Go nuts with the little tiny things that baby can grab, mouth and feel. Make sure you choose age-appropriate playthings that don't have pieces that can come loose and in baby's mouth. Some snuggly toys even include sounds like heartbeats, rain or the ocean to soothe baby to sleep.



## BIBS AND BURP CLOTHS

"We have so many extra bibs and burp cloths!" said no parent, ever. Bib and burp cloths, no matter how many you have, are always in short supply with a baby in the house. Gifts of these are always appreciated, especially if they

say something to make a tired parent laugh at 3 a.m.

## DIAPER BAGS

Diaper bags come in more shapes than sizes than they used to. Everything from chic totes to rustic backpacks even Dad will carry with pride now grace diaper bag shelves. Make

sure your chosen bag is, no matter its shape, easy to clean and clean out.

## BOOKS

Board books for baby are always welcome, especially with some touching sentiments penned inside. Then there's the parenting books

that might help out a new mom and dad. The "What to Expect" series is always popular. Or you can go for something on the humorous side. Look for titles like "Welcome to the Club: 100 Parenting Milestones You Never Saw Coming" by Raquel D'Apice, creator of The Ugly Volvo blog.





# Popular Baby Names

Every year, the Social Security Administration ranks the top baby names for newborns in that Year. For 2020, boys named Liam, Noah, Oliver, Elijah and William were tops, while for girls, Olivia, Emma, Ava, Charlotte and Sophia ruled the roost.

Babycenter.com ranks the most popular names at any given time according to parents and parents-to-be that use their site. Those top names include, for boys:

Liam, Noah, Oliver, Elijah, Lucas, Mason, Levi, James, Mateo, Asher.

And for girls:

Olivia, Emma, Amelia, Ava, Sophia, Charlotte, Isabella, Mia, Luna, Harper.

The Social Security Administration also tracks names that are losing favor. For boys, that's the odd mix of

Alexzander, Javion, Reynash, Kenny and Yisroel. Less-popular names for girls include Marissa, Amiya, Annabella, Patricia and Tatiana.

Place names are still having a moment, Nameberry says, so look for little ones named Rome, Milan, Salem, Aspen, Austin, Boston, Dallas and Memphis. Names from the news are also ruling the roost, so you'll see Kamalas, Jills, Kobes and Giannas, too.

Karen — of meme fame — saw a sharp drop-off, but the SSA reported

that Avayah, Denisse, Jianna, Capri and Rosalia saw big jumps in popularity for girls. For boys, Zyair, Jaxtyn, Jakobe, Kylo and Aziel are on the rise. Also look for more twists on common names, like Jaxon for Jackson or Denisse for Denise.

Longer names are also trending again, indicating that short, monosyllabic names like Luca and Luna have maybe had their day. BabyNames.com founder and CEO Jennifer Moss is also seeing more power names, such as Rogue, Maverick, Remington, Freya and Apollo.

"I believe that parents want to infuse strength into their children during these difficult times," she said.

If you've got a literary bent, you can also take names from books. Consider these:

- Meg/Margaret, Jo/Josephine, Beth/Elizabeth or Amy from "Little Women."

- Guinevere, Lancelot, Percival, Caelia, Lionel or Merlin from Arthurian legends.

- Belle, Gretel, Hansel, Briar Rose, Ella from fairytale fame.

- Jane or Austen, for Jane Austen, or Cassandra, for Jane's sister.

- Anne, Emily, Charlotte and Branwell, the Bronte siblings.
- Airen, Balin, Belladonna, Elanor, Elenna, Merry, Pearl or Pippin from the Tolkien books.

- Ada, Belinda, Camilla, Felix, Josiah or Vincent from the works of Charles Dickens.

- Brienne, Sansa, Catelyn, Bran, Jon or Yara/Asha from George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Fire and Ice" series.

# Carseat 101

You'll need a carseat from the first moment your new baby leaves the hospital until they're big enough to fit into an adult seat belt, anywhere from 8-10 years.

Car seats keep your children safe in case of a car accident by keeping their smaller bodies properly positioned to endure the extreme forces that happen in a wreck.

On top of all that pressure, you'll also need to transition from one car seat to another as your children grows. And about half of the car seats traveling around in cars today aren't installed properly. Consumer Reports says it tests car seats in a simulated 35-mph crash and also ranks them based on ease of use. Here's what the experts at the magazine say you need to know before you go anywhere with baby.

## KNOW YOUR BABY, YOUR STORES AND YOUR CAR

Keep track of your child's height and weight and move them from carseat to carseat accordingly. Also know your stores – some places will let you test-install a seat in your car so that you can see how well it fits you, your car and your child. If they don't let you test install, at least make sure they have a robust return policy and only purchase



© ADOBE STOCK

online after you've seen the seat in real life. You should also read up in your car's owners manual about how to install seats using belts or the LATCH system.

## THE RULES

You should keep your baby rear-facing until at least 2 years old or when they exceed the rear-facing height or weight limits of their seat. They should also wear a forward-facing harness for as long as they can. Children

need booster seats until they are 57 inches tall – usually between 8-12 years old – and the vehicle's seat belt fits them properly.

Replace any seat that's been damaged or in an accident, or is past its expiration date. Seat expiration dates are usually printed on the bottom of the carseat.

Children should ride in the backseat until age 13.

Consumer Reports says to check for **Right seat.** Make sure your

child is within the seat's height and weight limits. Age is also important, even if the child is tall for their age, because it reflects your child's skeletal development.

**Seat tight.** The seat shouldn't move more than an inch from side to side or front to back.

**Harness height.** For rear-facing seats, the harness straps should be at or below the baby's shoulders. For forward-facing, harness straps should be at or above the

shoulders and chest clips at armpit level.

**Harness tight.** You shouldn't be able to pinch the fabric straps at the child's shoulders.

**Recline right and tether tight.** The recline level should be correct — many seats have an indicator — and the tethers for either the seat belt or LATCH system should be tight. Always attach the top tether to prevent forward movement and resulting head injuries.



# Baby-Proofing your Home

Once baby is mobile, all bets (and other breakables, usually) are off. They're into everything as they explore and learn about their world.

You can keep them safe while they do so with these baby proofing tips from Parents magazine.

## BIG PROBLEMS IN OLDER HOMES

If you're in a home that's a little bit older, you should check for lead paint, especially if you've got any surfaces with peeling or chipping paint. Lead paint is more typically found in homes built before 1978. You should also check for things like broken windows, leaking hot water heaters, and replace your smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors if they aren't working properly.

## THE KITCHEN

Put locks on bottom cabinets and the pantry. Magnetic locks can be mounted to the inside of the cabinets, meaning no damage to the outside ones. Also invest in locks for the stove knobs and find a new (higher) place for cleaners and anything else children can get into. Put nonskid pads under rugs to keep baby from sliding around tile or hard floors.

## FURNITURE

Find sharp edges and soften



© ADOBE STOCK

them with stick-on corner guards to keep that soft little noggin from unnecessary bumps and bruises. You'll also want to cover your upholstery with slipcovers now, as you're about to get into an era of some serious spills. Mount any furniture that may tip, such as bookcases or dressers, to the wall well before your

child is mobile.

## BATHROOM

We tend to keep medications and other toxic things, such as cleaning supplies, in the bathroom. Common household items like hand sanitizers and soaps, need to be moved beyond baby's reach and cabinets should

have safety latches. Also invest in a toilet lock and a bathwater thermometer.

## EVERYWHERE ELSE

Put up safety gates in places that should be off limits to baby or on the stairs.

Do a sweep of any houseplants to make sure they are nontoxic. Vacuum your floors

regularly to remove small items that are also choking hazards, such as loose change. Liquor cabinets should also be locked, and heating vents and radiators should be covered to prevent burns.

Cosmetics and shampoos should also be moved; they can be attractive to little ones.

# Finding a Pediatrician

You'll need to find a pediatrician, surprisingly enough, before you even have your baby.

Ask your obstetrician for recommendations; she should know all of them in your community and, more important, which ones also have privileges at the hospital where you'll be delivering. Also ask friends and family with children who they use, or contact a nearby hospital, medical school or medical society for recommendations.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

While you're evaluating pediatricians, you'll need to ask some basic questions the American Academy of Pediatrics says. These include:

- Is the pediatrician accepting new patients with my insurance or managed care plan?
- What are the office hours?
- What is the best time to call with routine questions?
- How does the office handle billing and insurance? Is payment due at the time of the visit?

## WHEN WILL YOU SEE THE PEDIATRICIAN?

When you're admitted to labor and delivery, the nurse there will ask for the name of your pediatrician and then phone them when your baby is born. A staff pediatrician at the hospital will probably do



© ADOBE STOCK

an examination at birth, but your pediatrician will probably visit sometime on the first day. Ask if you can be present at the first exam to answer questions.

You should see the pediatrician every day you are in the hospital and schedule your first office visit before you're discharged. Your baby will

likely get their first immunizations before leaving the hospital, including the first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a checkup 48-72 hours after leaving the hospital to evaluate feeding, weight gain and jaundice. Subsequent visits will probably happen at about

two to four weeks old, then at two, four, six, nine and 12 months.

## HOW CAN YOU REACH YOUR PEDIATRICIAN?

As a new parent, you're going to have a lot of questions. Make sure you get the best way to reach your pediatrician both during hours and

after hours. Some pediatricians have a specific call-in period for questions while others prefer emails they can answer throughout the day. If the staff and not the doctor is answering the questions, make sure to ask ahead of time what their training is and how often they get continuing education.



# Baby's Milestones

As your baby grows and develops both mentally and physically, they'll reach certain milestones in how they play, learn, speak and move.

The CDC has certain developmental milestones children should reach by a certain age, though every child is different. Discuss any concerns with your pediatrician.

## TWO MONTHS

**Social and emotional milestones.** Baby should smile at people, briefly calm themselves and try to look at their parents or caregivers.

**Language/communication.** Baby should coo or make gurgling sounds and turn their head toward sounds.

**Cognitive.** Baby should pay attention to faces, follow things with their eyes and recognize people at a distance. They should act bored if their activity doesn't change.

**Movement/physical development.** Baby can hold his head up and begins to push up when lying on his stomach. Baby should make smoother movements with her arms and legs.

## FOUR MONTHS

**Social and emotional.** Baby should smile spontaneously, especially at people. They will



© ADOBE STOCK

like to play with people and may cry when playing stops. Baby will copy movements and facial expressions, such as smiling or frowning.

**Language/communication.** Baby will babble and copy sounds he hears. He should cry in different ways to show hunger, pain or being tired.

**Cognitive.** Baby will let you know if she is happy or sad,

respond to affection, reaches for a toy with one hand and use her hands and eyes together, such as seeing the toy and reaching for it.

**Movement/physical development.** Baby should hold his head steady and unsupported, push down on his legs when his feet are on a hard surface, and may roll over from tummy to back.

## SIX MONTHS

**Social and emotional.** Baby will know familiar faces and like to play with others, especially their parents. They like to look at themselves in a mirror.

**Language/communication.** He will respond to sounds by making sounds and will string vowels together while babbling. He likes to take turns with a caregiver while making sounds

and will respond to his name.

**Cognitive.** Baby looks at things nearby and brings things to their mouth. They may also try to get things out of reach.

**Movement/physical development.** Baby will roll over in both directions and begin to sit without support. While standing, they will support their weight on their legs and may bounce.