



Baby  
Care  
GUIDE

# Prepping For Baby

**C**ongratulations! You have just found out you are expecting and most likely are very excited about the impending new addition.

Now it's time to plan. Nine months might seem like a significant amount of time, but it will blow by at a ridiculous rate.

Here are the things you should consider, big and small.

## THE BIG STUFF

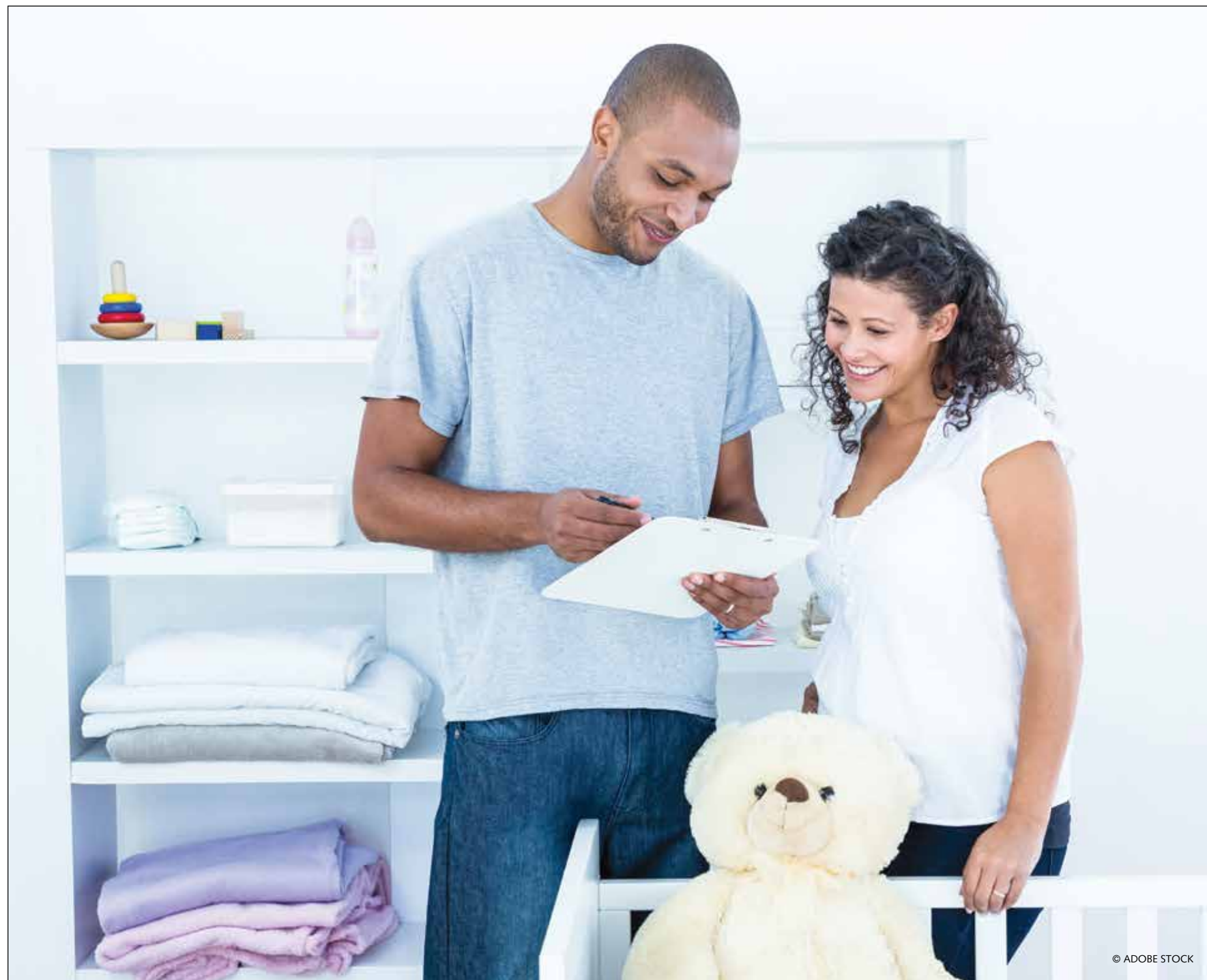
Finances and childcare hold the top of the list in preparing for baby. How will you pay for your expenses? Who will be responsible for the primary care of your child if both parents will work?

If daycare is your choice, now is the time to begin researching centers. Many well-respected care facilities fill up quickly and have waiting lists. It is a good idea to get your name on waiting lists now before baby arrives.

You also should sit down with a local financial advisor and discuss savings plans for your baby. While a general savings account is a great start, a financial planner will know the most efficient ways to have your money work for you.

## THE FUN STUFF

Will your child have his own room? If this is not your first



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child, will he be sharing a room with a sibling? Will you purchase a crib and a bassinet, or just one or the other?

Decorating the nursery is an exciting way to plan for baby's arrival. This is the time to pre-

wash clothing, stock the changing table and choose bedding and decor.

## THE DETAILS

A month before you're due to bring baby home, it's time to

stock up on everything.

You'll need not just supplies specific to baby, but the things you and your family will need. Stock your pantry. Make dinners and freeze them with directions for cooking or

reheating attached.

You will be thankful in week three or four when you feel like you haven't slept in years that "making dinner" is just pulling something out of the freezer and popping it in the oven.

# Bringing Home Baby

The day you've been waiting so long for is finally here: It is time to bring your precious son or daughter home with you. You will find that no matter how you've prepped, there are certain aspects of being a new parent that you didn't anticipate.

This is completely normal, and all new parents experience this feeling of being slightly overwhelmed. Managing your stress is essential for keeping both you and baby calm and happy.

## ASK FOR ADVICE

There is no better resource for a new mother than other mothers. They have been there before and experienced many of the things you will experience. Learn from their mistakes. Benefit from their wisdom.

Other mothers will help calm your anxiety and help you learn your own path in parenthood. But remember, at the end of the day, it is advice. It is your choice whether to follow it.

If someone offers you advice with a side of judgment, say no thank you and walk away.

## RELY ON YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

If someone asks if there is anything he can do, don't shy away from the offer. Even if it doesn't feel like you need help right now, you have no idea the relief you will feel knowing there is a dinner in the freezer you can pop in the oven.

Good friends or family



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members are great people to ask to set up a meal train for you, allowing people to sign up to bring a meal by on a certain day after baby comes home.

## SLEEP RESPONSIBLY

There is a reason airlines instruct you to put on your oxygen mask before assisting your children. Similarly, taking care of yourself will help you

better care for baby.

Chronic sleep deprivation can impair your cognitive functioning and can lead to high blood pressure, heart failure and stroke. While offers of help

are a lifeline, don't be afraid to ask for help. Having your spouse or another family member or friend take a night shift once in a while can help you catch some much-needed Zs.

# Recognizing Emergencies

It can be hard to determine how ill your baby might be. This is especially true for new parents — who probably are used to dealing with people who can speak up when they aren't feeling well and might not be around young children enough to recognize telltale symptoms that could lead to something more serious.

The most important tip for assessing your baby's health is remaining calm.

Be on the look out for:

- Clean diapers. If your baby isn't having bowel movement every 24 hours, there might be a larger issue. Your infant also should have at least six wet diapers every 24 hours.
  - Nose bleeds
  - Red skin around the base of the umbilical cord or belly button
  - Rapid breathing
  - Tinges of blue around the lips or fingernails
  - Heavy bleeding around the site of circumcision
  - Excessive diarrhea or vomiting
  - Excessive twitching or jerky movements
  - Refusal to eat
  - Yellowing of the skin or eyes.
- If your infant exhibits any of these signs, call a doctor immediately.

## TRUST YOUR INSTINCT

You might be a new parent, but your instincts should not be dismissed. If something feels wrong to you, follow up with a call to the doctor. You will never feel sorry you did.

Your doctor's phone number, as well as phone numbers for your local hospital and the Poison Control hotline (800-222-1222) should be kept in a location that is easily accessible. (The refrigerator is great for this.)

## ITEMS TO KEEP ON HAND

There are a number of items you should keep on hand that will help you treat minor discomforts and diagnose more serious issues. Never be without



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the following:

- Infant thermometers (both ear and rectal);

- Hydrocortisone cream;
- Rubbing alcohol, cotton swabs, and tweezers;

- Petroleum jelly;
- Saline nose drops; and
- Nasal aspirator bulb.

# Diaper Low Down

There are many decisions one must make as a parent — and you will inevitably be judged by someone on every single one of them.

This makes it all the more important for you to be informed and comfortable with your parenting choices, from feeding to childcare to diapers.

You have two main options for diapering your baby: cloth reusable diapers or disposable diapers. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Consider the following:

## **COST**

It will cost between \$2,500 and \$3,000 to diaper a baby using disposable diapers for two years. That same family could spend \$800 to \$1,000 on cloth diapers and supplies per baby over the same amount of time.

It should be no surprise that you will save money using cloth diapers. Because cloth diapers can be reused hundreds of times, the cost per change is significantly less.

Cloth diapers also can be reused with siblings that might come along. If cost is a weighty consideration, cloth diapers offer a clear financial advantage.

## **CONVENIENCE**

You shouldn't contemplate your baby's diapers without considering convenience. One of the most common miscon-

ceptions about cloth diapers is that they are difficult to maintain and require a lot of extra work.

Cloth diapers have come a long way from their distant ancestors. Gone are the days of scary pinning, and here to stay are easy (and safe) closures.

Cleaning many brands of cloth diapers is as simple as throwing them in your washing machine. However, cloth diapers are never going to beat the convenience of popping disposables in a garbage can.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Both cloth diapers and disposable diapers have a similar carbon footprint. Disposable diapers end up in landfills (most of which are not even 50 percent biodegradable), while cloth diapers use considerable energy and water in cleaning.

## **HEALTH AND COMFORT**

There is no notable difference in this area. How you decide to diaper your child is a personal decision. A baby is healthiest when it is clean and dry.

As long as you change your baby when his diaper is full, you are keeping your baby's health as a top concern.



# Consider the Cost

**H**aving and raising a child is not an inexpensive endeavor. According to a 2010 USDA report, the average American middle-income family will spend approximately \$12,000 on child-related expenses in their child's first year — and this is just the beginning of a very long road of child rearing.

If you are considering having a child, or are currently expecting, take some steps to make informed decisions about money.

## ASSESS YOUR FINANCES

This is the time to take a hard look at your finances, if you have not already done so. Are you or your spouse considering leaving your job once baby arrives? Will you require a daycare provider?

While there are certain surprises that will happen along the way, this should not be one of them. Create a savings plan and stick with it. Decide before the baby arrives what that money will be used for. This simple step can save you from a major headache down the road.

## SPEND WISELY

As expensive as the statistics portray parenthood to be, it can be very much like planning a wedding. Some get married at the cost of a ring and a marriage license. Others decide to throw lavish affairs, complete with an expensive dress and chocolate fountain.

There are many things babies simply don't need — or at the very least, don't need an abundance of. Do your research, talk with other parents and make your own list of baby's "necessities."



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There are many items veteran parents will say were completely useless, as well as items they can't imagine parenting without.

Listen closely. Learn.

## PREPARE TO STRETCH

No matter how much planning you do, there will be

expenses that come up for which you haven't accounted.

Are you ready to give up nights with friends or a family vacation in order to pay for

them? Asking yourself these questions will help you focus on your true desires. Are you prepared to focus your resources on someone else?

# Your Baby's Routine

**B**ringing a new baby into your home is incredibly rewarding, but it also can be overwhelming.

Ease both your stress and your baby's stress by practicing a regular schedule for feeding, sleeping and bonding activities that you can both count on.

## **PRACTICE A BEDTIME ROUTINE**

Choose a bedtime routine and start practicing it as soon as you bring baby home. Establishing a routine before bedtime is one of the most important elements in creating a regular schedule and teaching your child to sleep through the night.

This can be as simple as bath and breast or bottle, and rocking in a dimly lit room. Try hard to stick to approximately the same time for your bedtime ritual.

## **HELP YOUR BABY LEARN NIGHT AND DAY**

Remember your baby has spent the last nine months in the womb, so day and night are easily mixed up for new babies. They may sleep for long stretches during the day and take several naps.

This will only aid their alertness at night — when you are ready for them to rest. Practicing a bedtime routine will help, but so will other habits, such as keeping the house



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lights dim and talking softly. This will help your baby learn that day is the time for play and socialization.

## **RESIST DEVIATION**

Once you've set a schedule,

resist the urge to deviate from it. Your baby's schedule must trump your plans. You are a parent now, which means you made the executive decision months ago to put someone else's needs above your desires.

## **BUT EXPECT CHANGES**

This does not mean that the routine won't need tweaking. You will begin to understand your baby as an individual and pick up on his cues.

You will learn how much

sleep your baby requires, and you might need to adjust his bedtime or morning routine in order to initiate sleeping through the night.

Baby's schedule also will need adjusting as he grows.

# Twins and Multiples

**F**inding out you are expecting twins can leave you with many feelings at once. You might feel excitement, fear, anxiety, shock or a sense of being completely overwhelmed. There is a lot to know when it comes to caring for multiples.

Half the battle of being prepared is about getting your questions answered. Here are just a few considerations when raising multiples.

## THE PREP WORK

Before the babies even arrive, you will need to assess their needs. The nursery might be the most obvious place to start, but not necessarily the most helpful.

Think about high chairs, changing pads, bottles (if bottle feeding) and basic clothing. You also should do research into strollers and reflect on your own needs. Strollers for multiples come in side-by-side and tandem models.

## FEEDING

Once your babies arrive, you might feel as if all you're doing is feeding them. By the time the second is fed, burped and changed, the first is hungry all over again. Take comfort in knowing that this phase will only last a few months.

Feeding with formula might prove more convenient for mothers of multiples. Breast feeding can prove challenging, but many mothers choose this option because of the benefits to their babies.

If your choice is to breast-feed, be sure to spend as much time as possible with the lactation specialist in the hospital before your release. The more



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you know before you get home, the more comfortable and confident you will be.

## BONDING

Bonding with your children

is one of the greatest joys of parenthood. Celebrate your babies as the individuals they are. Try to spend time with each child one on one.

Get to know them. If both of

your children are the same sex, you might wait to take off their hospital ID tags until you know them better. It is important not to think of your twin as twins but as two children who hap-

pen to be the same age.

Be sure to refer to them by name and not as “the twins.” This will help both you and them recognize their individuality.