

What you really need for baby

Tips on the things you should and should not forego, from parents and professionals who know

BY BETHEL SWIFT

Because babies are just so gosh darn cute, it's easy to get caught up in a buying-for-baby frenzy that destroys your budget on things you'll probably never use. The best way to decide the must-haves is to consider each of your baby's needs:

Food

If you plan to bottle feed, keep plenty of formula and at least two to four, 4-ounce bottles on hand. Experiment with nipples of varying flow to see what your baby prefers, then stick with it when you are ready to move onto 8-ounce bottles. If you are breastfeeding, you'll need: breast pads, nursing bras, nipple lotion and if you plan on storing any milk, bottles and a breast pump. Both feeding options will require a good supply of burping cloths.

Be ready to switch over to sippy cups at 8 or 9 months. When your infant is ready to move onto solids, one or two plastic bibs and baby-size spoons, forks and bowls should be enough.

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Bethel Swift is a former Chicago Parent intern.



BABY NEEDS

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Other optional items: Dr. Ariadna Lanski, a clinical psychologist and founder of the Chicago-based New Mom Network, recommends buying a toothbrush for your baby to chew on at about 6 months. With supervision, this can be a good technique to begin good dental hygiene and provide some relief for teething. Dr. Peggy Supple, a

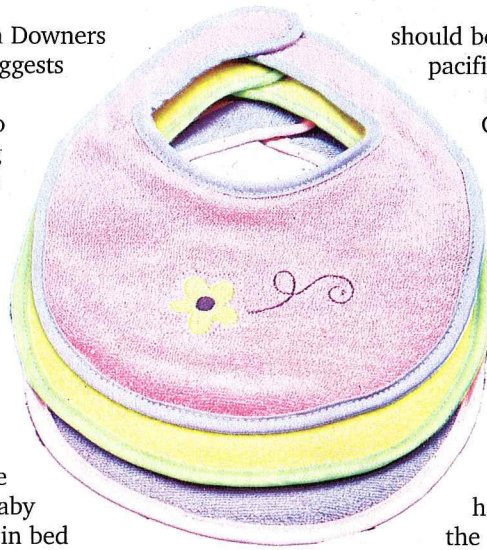


pediatrician in Downers Grove, also suggests investing in a bottle brush to make cleaning nipples a little easier.

Sleep

While many bedding options are available, one thing is certain: "Even if you're nursing, the baby should not be in bed with you," says Supple.

A basic crib that meets Consumer Product Safety Commission standards (visit www.cpsc.gov) is always a good choice. The infant should be centered and placed toward the bottom of the crib with any sheet or blanket tucked tightly into the bottom and sides of the mattress. Supple tells parents nothing should dangle over the crib and nothing



should be in the crib except for a pacifier, if desired.

Other optional items: Cosleepers and bassinets are comforting for some parents, but keep in mind, infants will quickly outgrow these.

Clothing

Comfort, safety and simplicity are all important considerations when shopping for baby clothes. Lanski compiled a list of must-haves to keep on hand for the first year, including:

- diapers (at least 2-3 packs for the first week)
- fitted crib sheets (3)
- receiving blankets (2-4)
- pajamas or body suits (4-6)
- onesies (minimum 6)
- bibs (2-4)
- socks, booties and mittens (4-6)
- caps/hats (1-2)

Dr. Ken Polin of Glenview Town and

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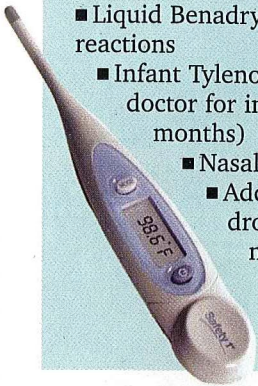
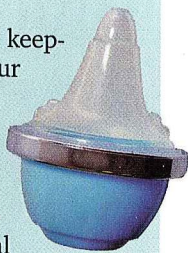
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Stock up your medicine cabinet

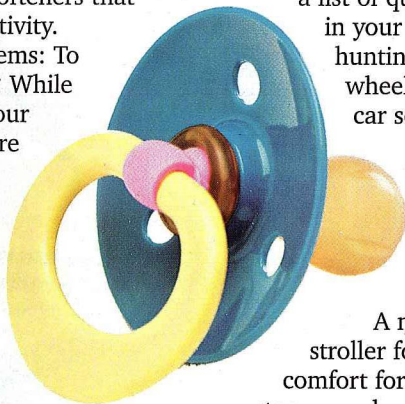
Experts recommend keeping the following in your medicine cabinet:

- Alcohol wipes or swabs for baby's umbilical cord
- An inexpensive, digital thermometer (rectal ones work best)
- Liquid Benadryl for allergic reactions
- Infant Tylenol (check with doctor for infants under 3 months)
- Nasal aspirator
- Additive-free saline drops to break up mucus
- Teething gel
- Bacitracin



Country Pediatrics, cautions parents to look out for fabric softeners that can cause skin sensitivity.

Other optional items: To shoe or not to shoe? While shoes won't harm your child, Polin says there is no reason to buy them for support. Lanski agrees that hot button issues like pacifiers and shoes are really "dependant on the philosophy of each parent."

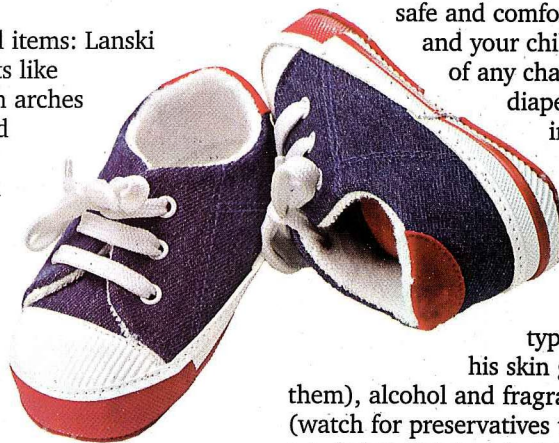


Play

Most experts recommend "tried-and-true toys." In this age of gizmos and gadgets, traditional toys are the unsung heroes of childhood: rattles, stuffed animals, rings, blocks and books are all good. While you may not think of books as toys, babies love to hold, chew and interact with books. Sara Johnsin, Infant/Toddler coordinator with Kidwatch Plus Day Care, says infants at her daycare center prefer "the old standbys"—floor toys versus seats and

saucers and pop up toys over ones that talk and make noises. The New Mom Network has a guide on age appropriate toys at its Web site, www.newmomnetwork.com.

Other optional items: Lanski says many parents like activity mats with arches to help their child develop motor skills. Music can add another aspect to your infant's play-time. Let your baby listen to what you are listening to. "Play a variety and watch what your child likes," Supple says.



Travel

Whether your main mode of transportation is a car or your own feet, you'll want to bring baby along in a stroller, car seat or carrier. Do plenty of research, talk to other parents and make a list of qualities that you would like in your stroller before you start hunting for that perfect set of wheels. "Graco makes the best car seats," Lanski says, citing their lightweight design and secure locking system. Also good are Britax infant car seats and Baby Bjorn slings.

Other optional items: A more lightweight, compact stroller for your car can be a big comfort for trips to the grocery store or a day with grandparents.



Clean

Lanski says you don't need an expensive changing table—just a simple pad that can be placed wherever is safe and comfortable for you and your child. Basic staples of any changing area and diaper bag should include: diapers (Polin says they don't need to be name brand, but try to keep the same type of diaper so his skin gets used to

them), alcohol and fragrance free wipes (watch for preservatives that might irritate baby's skin) and white oxide-based diaper rash cream. Supple recommends Boudreaux's Butt Paste, which should be applied thickly and not scrubbed off when bathing your infant. All you really need for bath time is a clean tub, washcloth, mild baby soap and a comb and/or brush.

Other optional items: Some parents like foam floating devices to help keep a slippery baby afloat during bath time. Supple cautions these devices are not enough to keep an under-supervised baby from drowning. Ⓢ