

# Preparing for Baby: The 10 Essentials

By Jennifer Steinbach, PCD(DONA)

Every company selling baby items would love to have you spend a fortune in order to care for your newborn; but in reality, parents need only a few items for their new job. Simplify your life and cut down on expenses by sticking to this list of essentials that will satisfy your baby's needs:

1. **Infant Car Safety Seat.** Make sure you have purchased and installed one correctly prior to the birth. Your local police station has information on car seat installation safety checks.
2. **Baby Sling.** These traditional wonders are coming back in style. Parents realize their convenience, how much happier babies are when carried in them and how easy they are to use. Good slings are made of fabric with a double ring at the shoulder for adjustments. They offer the most versatility in terms of the baby's size (newborn to at least 24 months) and with positions in which the baby can be carried.
3. **Bassinet or Co-sleeper.** Infants sleeping in the same bed or room as the mother enhances the breastfeeding relationship and reduce the risk of SIDS<sup>1 2</sup>. Night feedings will be more peaceful and easier when the baby is so close. Your family may decide to co-sleep, so don't worry about having a crib ahead of time.
4. **Breastfeeding Support/Education.** Breastfeeding is an art to be learned by both the mother and baby together. Mothers can prepare by reading a book, (see the resource list), getting connected with a La Leche League breastfeeding support group and having the name and telephone number of a lactation specialist on hand. Take a class, if there is one available.
5. **Newborn Layette.** A small, simple collection of onesies, sleepers or layette gowns, hats, receiving blankets and burp cloths will have you prepared. You'll receive more of these items as gifts both before and after the baby is born.
6. **Diapers and Diapering Supplies.** Whether you decide on cloth or disposable, it is a good idea to stock up on some supplies before the baby is born. Changing tables, diaper genies and wipe warmers are not essentials in caring for your newborn.

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<sup>1</sup> AAP Policy Statement, Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk, *Pediatrics*. 2005;115 :496-506.; Blair PS, Fleming PJ, Smith IJ, et al. Babies sleeping with parents: case-control study of factors influencing the risk of the sudden infant death syndrome. *BMJ*. 1999;319 :1457 –1462.; McKenna, James. Babies Need Their Mothers Beside Them. *World Health*. Apr-May 1999.

7. **Postpartum Support.** Adequate postpartum support decreases the mother's risk of postpartum depression and increases the breastfeeding success rate<sup>3</sup>. Build a support network of friends, family, a postpartum doula (an individual who comes to the family's home and is trained to support mom, baby and family) or a combination of individuals. The assistance your new family receives during the postpartum period is essential to the mental and physical health and well-being of not only the baby and mother, but every household member.
8. **Pediatrician or Family Doctor for the baby.** Seek out recommendations and find a doctor for your baby in advance of the birth. A good doctor should make time for a "getting to know you" appointment. Ask questions about how the doctor would handle different situations or illnesses, vaccines, well-baby check-ups, etc.
9. **Basic Medical and Bathing Supplies.** Gather together a rectal thermometer, a nasal aspirator, some baby emery boards or nail clippers, a mild, baby bath soap and baby shampoo.
10. **Do A Safety Check.** Read-up on infant safety information regarding infant bedding, clothing, toys and your home environment. Check baby's clothing, bedding and toys for any choking or strangulation hazards. Turn back your hot water heater and install properly working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Do not allow smoking in your house or around your baby and take an Infant & Child CPR course from the American Red Cross.

## A Few Resources

### Books:

*The Baby Book*, Dr. William Sears

*The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding*, La Leche League International

*So That's What They're For!*, Janet Tamaro

*Your Amazing Newborn*, Marshall Klaus & Phyllis Klaus

### Internet:

[www.AskDrSears.com](http://www.AskDrSears.com)

[www.LaLecheLeague.com](http://www.LaLecheLeague.com)

[www.DONA.org\(doulas\)](http://www.DONA.org(doulas))

[www.breastfeeding.com](http://www.breastfeeding.com)

[www.attachmentparenting.com](http://www.attachmentparenting.com)

[www.mothering.com](http://www.mothering.com)

*About the Author : Jennifer Steinbach is a postpartum doula and a breastfeeding advocate who lives in Dayton, Ohio with her fabulous husband and two energetic boys.*

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<sup>3</sup> DONA International Position Paper. The Postpartum Doula's Role in Maternity Care. 2002; Womenshealth.gov. *Depression During and After Pregnancy*. Retrieved September 7, 06 from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services website <http://www.4woman.gov/faq/postpartum.htm>