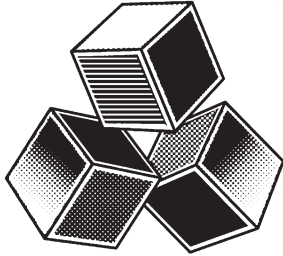


Getting Ready



PARENT EXPRESS

A Guide for You and Your Baby

Dear Parent-to-Be:

It may be any day now!

Now that your baby is nearly due, you probably are getting impatient. Sometimes it seems like the baby will never arrive. But he or she will—and soon!

Having a baby is like starting a new job. Of course, you'll be getting on-the-job-training after your baby is born. In addition to learning from your own experiences, this issue of *Parent Express* offers information and suggestions to help you prepare for the times ahead.

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- ▶ Having Your Baby
- ▶ Taking Your Baby Home
- ▶ Invest in a Car Safety Seat Now
- ▶ Infant Carrier Seats and Safety

Start Planning Now

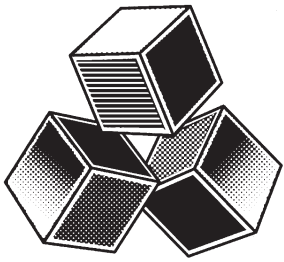
It's not too soon to think about how you're going to care for yourself after your baby's birth. How about lining up some friends and relatives to help out with the new baby, particularly the first week or two at home?

Fathers, have you considered taking some time off work? It's important for you to help and to feel part of things.

If you don't expect to have people around to help, prepare some simple one-course meals in advance and freeze them. If you don't have freezer space, stock up on some simple-to-prepare foods so you don't have to spend a lot of time and energy cooking your first few days home.

Having Your Baby Childbirth

Having a baby is a natural event of life, but that doesn't mean it's painless! Special methods of childbirth and medication have been developed to help mothers during childbirth. One of the most popular is the Lamaze Method. The mother-to-be learns breathing and relaxation exercises with the help of a partner. Fear of pain may make a mother tense. That sets up a destructive cycle because tension can make the laboring mother feel more pain. That's why the Lamaze-trained mother and her partner practice breathing exercises and body positions during pregnancy to be prepared for the birth.



Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. Ask and get the answers! Remember, it is your first time as a parent, and you are entitled to know what to expect from your doctor and from the hospital.

Many mothers also need or want medication to help them with the intense sensation of labor and birth. Some painkillers are available during labor. They are given either by injection or by an intravenous (IV) solution. Some are given by a nurse, but others must be given by a specially trained doctor.

Many women use some combination of breathing and relaxation methods as well as medication. Check with your healthcare provider for more information about how you can prepare for the birth of your baby.

Caesarean Childbirth

With this type of birth, surgery is performed to remove the baby from the mother's womb. An incision is made through the abdominal wall and the uterus (womb) so that the baby can be born. (In births other than Caesarean, the baby moves through the vaginal canal until he emerges for birth.) In the United States, 20 to 30 percent of all babies are born by Caesarean section. You may have heard it called a "C-section." Among other conditions that might make a Caesarean birth necessary are these: the mother's pelvic opening may be too small for the baby to pass through or the mother's or baby's health may be in danger.

Premature Birth

A baby born four weeks or more before its due date is called a premature baby or a "preemie." Many times these babies weigh less than 5½ pounds and are considered low-birth-weight infants. They may stay in the hospital for a while to receive special care before going home to their parents.

Hospital

Most women have their babies delivered in a hospital by a doctor and the hospital staff. If you want to have your baby in a hospital but don't have a doctor yet and are not being seen at a clinic, call your city or county health department or call your hospital.

Here are a few things to keep in mind if you plan to have your baby in a hospital:

- Keep the phone numbers of your doctor, clinic, or hospital handy. Also keep the phone number of a friend or relative handy.
- Find out which hospital entrance to use, especially at night, and where you should go. If required, pre-register with the hospital.
- Find out how long it takes to get to the hospital. Then, when your labor pains start, you won't be worried about getting to the hospital on time.
- Ask what type of arrangements the hospital offers. Will your baby stay in the same room with you (rooming-in service)? Or will your baby be cared for in a nursery and brought to you only at feeding times?
- Ask the hospital for a tour of the maternity ward, nursery, and labor and delivery rooms so that you will be familiar with the surroundings.
- Find out what you need to bring to the hospital with you. Plan to bring things such as a nightgown, slippers, robe, toothbrush, and toothpaste, as well as some healthy snacks. You may feel more relaxed if you have a small bag packed and ready to go. It may seem silly to you now, but it helps to know that you are prepared.

- Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. Ask and get the answers! Remember, it is your first time as a parent, and you are entitled to know what to expect from your doctor and from the hospital.

Taking Your Baby Home

What Your Baby Will Eat

Breastfeeding has advantages. It:

- Provides a handy feeding method
- Contains essential nutrients in easily digested form
- Burns more calories to help new mothers return to their pre-pregnancy weight more quickly
- Protects the baby from some infections and allergies
- Helps restore the mother's uterus (womb) to normal size
- Saves money

Bottle-feeding also has advantages. It:

- Provides a flexible feeding method for busy parents
- Provides a convenient feeding method
- Contains essential nutrients when instructions are followed
- Allows others to feed the baby
- Allows a mother who cannot breastfeed to provide good nutrition for her newborn

Where Your Baby Will Sleep

You can use a crib, a car bed, or a cradle. Here are some things you should look for in new or used cribs:

- ▶ Bumper pads should not be used in cribs because of the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Crib slats should be no more than 2³/₈ inches apart.
- ▶ The mattress should be tight fitting. If you can slip two or more fingers between the mattress and slats, put rolled-up towels between them or replace the mattress with a snug-fitting one. Do not use a pillow.
- ▶ The safety latch for dropping the crib's side should be one that the baby can't work. (A foot release is handy for parents). Sides should be high enough so the baby can't climb over.
- ▶ All wooden surfaces should be smooth and free of splinters with no rough or sharp edges.
- ▶ Damaged teething rails on used cribs should be removed and replaced.
- ▶ All plastic packaging from new cribs should be removed. Before throwing such materials away, tie them in knots. (Children can suffocate while playing with plastic.)

What Your Baby Will Wear

Your baby doesn't need an expensive wardrobe. Here are some suggestions for your baby's clothes:

- ▶ 2 to 3 one-piece stretch suits or long gowns
- ▶ 3 to 4 small undershirts (those with snaps are easier)
- ▶ 4 pairs of waterproof pants

- ▶ Supply of "newborn" disposables or 2 to 3 dozen cloth diapers
- ▶ 4 diaper pins for cloth diapers
- ▶ 3 to 4 cotton blankets
- ▶ 1 or 2 warmer blankets
- ▶ 6 burp cloths (frequently cloth diapers)

Invest in a Car Safety Seat Now

Automobile accidents are the number one killer andcripler of children after the critical early weeks of life. Make riding in a car as safe as possible for your baby.

The most dangerous way for an infant to travel is in an adult's lap. A sudden stop of the car can throw a baby against the dashboard or through a car window. If the adult is not belted in, the child will be crushed between the adult's body and the windshield or dashboard. At 30 miles per hour, a 120-pound adult moves with the force of 2,400 pounds. Car seats, when properly installed and used, greatly reduce the likelihood of death or serious injury from a car accident.

Children weighing up to 20 pounds who are less than 1 year old should be placed in approved safety seats especially designed for infants. These seats face the rear of the vehicle and for greatest safety should be placed in the middle of the back seat of a vehicle. In an accident, the back—the strongest part of the baby's body—absorbs the shock, rather than the chest or abdomen absorbing it. Generally, the seat is equipped with a five-point harness—a pair of straps over the shoulders, a lap belt, and a crotch strap—to secure the infant to the safety seat. A rear-facing seat should be in the reclined position (at 45 degrees) with shoulder straps in the lowest slots. In many areas, safety

seats are available for rent from maternity units and health departments.

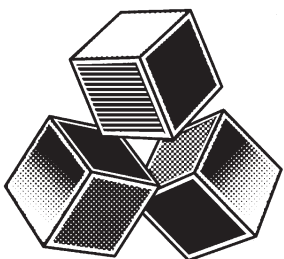
Convertible safety seats. These seats are designed to be used either facing to the rear or facing forward. A convertible seat must be rear facing until infants are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. Infants over 1 year who are between 20 and 40 pounds may use the seat in a forward-facing position. The seat back should be set in an upright position (at 90 degrees) with the shoulder straps placed through the highest slots.

Forward-facing safety seats. These seats are designed to be forward facing only and to be used by children over 20 pounds and older than 1 year. They may be used until the child weighs about 40 pounds. Forward-facing seats should have a five-point harness.

Booster seats. Children who have outgrown forward-facing safety seats should be placed in a booster seat. A booster seat permits the child to sit higher and to be restrained by the vehicle's seat belt. The seat belt then fits properly around the child's hips and shoulders. Children should ride in a booster seat until an adult seat belt fits correctly. This is usually when a child reaches about 4'9" in height and is between 8 and 12 years of age.

Contact staff with the KARS/Special KARS (Kids Are Riding Safely) program of the National Easter Seals Society at (800) 221-6827 for information about restraints for children with special needs who cannot use regular safety seats.

Whether you select a seat for an infant or toddler—or a convertible seat designed for infants and toddlers—and no matter which safety seat you select, the seat must be secured to the car by means of the car's safety belt.



The most dangerous way for an infant to travel is in an adult's lap. A sudden stop of the car can throw a baby against the dashboard or through a car window.

Be sure to install the seat according to directions. No child under 12 should be placed in a seat that has an air bag.

Consider the following questions when choosing a car safety seat:

- ▶ Are instructions clear and easy to follow?
- ▶ Are the harness straps easy to adjust?
- ▶ Will the harness and/or shield be easy to fasten and unfasten while putting the child in and out several times a day?
- ▶ Will the seat fit in your car in the positions where you want to use it?
- ▶ Can you thread the auto safety belt through the proper route on the safety seat? Will the belt stay tight?

Safety Tips

- ▶ Never leave sharp or heavy objects loose in the car. A sudden stop or collision could turn them into lethal weapons.
- ▶ Set a good example—buckle up every time you travel in your car.
- ▶ The safest location for your child's car seat is in the center position of the rear seat.
- ▶ Don't use an infant carrier as a car seat. It is not safe.
- ▶ Don't leave children alone in a car.
- ▶ Don't leave car doors unlocked when riding or driving.

Infant Carrier Seats and Safety

Babies love to be the center of things. They also love to be close to you. With an infant carrier seat, a baby can be a part of family life. Use the infant carrier when feeding or carrying your baby. The carrier seat is not for use in a car, however. (You can spoon-feed babies in a safety seat, but when bottle feeding, holding your baby encourages bonding.)

When choosing an infant carrier, make sure the seat is deep enough and has a chest or crotch strap so your baby won't slide out. Look for a seat with a wide base and a nonskid bottom.

Here are some rules for safe use of infant carrier seats:

- ▶ Always use the seat belt or crotch strap.
- ▶ Stay within arm's reach when the infant carrier seat is on a high place such as a table, sofa, or store counter.
- ▶ Be careful when using an infant carrier seat in a shopping cart. Your baby may wiggle and fall out of the cart.

Sources and Recommended Readings

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