

# Having a Baby on a Budget Tip Sheet

Having a baby doesn't have to be as expensive as conventional wisdom would have you believe. While every baby is different, there are a few basic items you should have on hand when baby arrives that don't have to cost you a lot of money. Many other items can be borrowed from family or friends or bought second hand as you think you need them, but you can probably get by with just these items. When possible, look for items that can do double duty (convertible car seat, convertible crib/toddler bed, booster chair) that will last longer.

## New Baby Essentials

- **Clothes:** 6-12 onesies, 6-12 sleepers, a few pair of socks, and a few hats
  - \**Money saving tip:* Find clothing for free or second hand off of websites like Craigslist, Freecycle, or from garage sales and consignment shops. Babies often outgrow their clothes quickly, so there are many parents looking to unload their babies' gently used clothing at bargain prices! If you would like, you can have a few nice outfits for baby for going out, but at home in general it will be easier to keep it simple.
- **Crib and mattress or Pack and Play** (unless you're planning to co-sleep)
  - \**Important note:* Cribs should be purchased new due to safety and recall concerns. You can check out crib recall statuses on this website: <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>
    - You need minimal bedding for a crib: about three to five fitted crib sheets and perhaps a waterproof crib mattress pad. You should not place any other items in the crib with your baby (blankets, stuffed animals, etc.) as they can increase the risk of SIDS.
    - Depending on the time of year, you may need to use wearable blankets or "Sleep Sacks" to keep your baby warm at night since traditional blankets are not safe to use in a crib. You may want 2 or 3 of these on hand.
- **Car seat:** Look into options for convertible car seats that you can use for many years as your child grows; they are more expensive upfront, but could be less expensive than purchasing different car seats as your child outgrows his/her previous seat.
  - \**Important note:* Car seats should be purchased new due to safety concerns about the history of the seat and if it's been in an accident; also look for local car seat clinics to make sure the seat is installed correctly.
- **Diapers/wipes** (either cloth or disposable)
  - You don't necessarily have to use name brand- try out a few different kinds to see which works best for your baby
    - If you are interested in cloth diapers, check out places like Craigslist and Freecycle to get deals on used diapers (many are in great condition and are a fraction of the price of new, plus you can resell them once you're done!)
    - Homemade wipes are easy to make and much cheaper than store bought! Check out these links for recipes and instructions:
      - <http://www.homemademamas.net/2010/07/homemade-baby-wipes.html>
      - <http://www.somedayilllearn.com/2011/10/homemade-cloth-baby-wipes/>
- **Burp cloths:** Around a dozen, make great clothing shields and in a pinch you can use a few as a blanket
  - Get creative! You can use items you already have around the house such as old towels, receiving blankets, etc. for these and other purposes

- **Baby Carrier:** A Moby type wrap and an Ergo carrier are both respected brands and can often be purchased second hand.
- **Bottles and formula** if not breastfeeding
  - Again, you don't have to use name brand formula, you can get store brands to save money. WIC also offers benefits to help cover formula costs: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>
  - Look for BPA-free bottles
- **Nursing/feeding pillow:** Specially designed to support your baby while you're nursing or bottle-feeding, these can help you avoid straining your shoulders or neck during feeding sessions. They're more convenient – and better at keeping your baby in position – than regular pillows.

Other items you may want include a stroller, breast pump, bouncer, swing, and so on, but most of these items you may be able to wait and see if you need them or can borrow from a family member or friend to see if your baby likes them before purchasing. Instead of buying a changing table, you may be able to use a blanket or changing pad on the top of a dresser you already have in your house. As your baby starts eating solid food, you can also look for fold up booster seats that convert from use for infants to toddlers instead of a full high chair. There's no need to fully outfit a nursery for the baby if you can't or don't want to- as long as s/he has a safe, comfortable place to sleep, s/he doesn't care what the room looks like. All babies are different, but in general they don't need a lot of "stuff" but rather need love, attention, and their basic needs (food, shelter, & clothing) met. **Remember- You don't have to spend a lot of money on a new baby to be a great parent!**

### Other Money Saving Tips

- **Use household items as toys**
  - While not all household items can be used for toys, many can. Items such as pots and pans, plastic containers, plastic and wooden kitchen utensils, boxes, and a mirror for baby to look into during tummy time are great "toys" that you already have.
- **Home remedies for teething**
  - Instead of buying items specifically made for teething, try using hard foods from home. If your baby is eating solid foods, you might offer something edible for gnawing — such as a peeled and chilled cucumber or carrot (not frozen though, as the extreme cold may be harmful to baby). Keep a close eye on your baby, however. Any pieces that break off might pose a choking hazard.
  - <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/teething/FL00102>

### Websites with Additional Money-Saving Ideas for a New Baby

- <http://www.hellobee.com/2011/11/28/baby-money-saving-tips/>
- <http://moneysavingmom.com/category/series/having-a-baby-without-breaking-the-bank?orderby=date&order=ASC>
- <http://naturalmomstalkradio.com/blog/what-do-i-buy-that-i-can-make/>
- <http://pregnant.thebump.com/getting-pregnant/fertility-ovulation/articles/51-ways-to-save-up-for-baby.aspx>