

Parent Express

A GUIDE FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY



TOPIC

Getting ready

**Dear parent-to-be,
It could 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.

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 with the new baby, particularly during 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 won't 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 during your first few days home.

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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 might 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.

Many mothers also need or want medication to help them with the intense sensation of labor and birth.

Some pain medications 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 health-care 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 percent to 30 percent of all babies are born by Caesarean section. You might have heard it called a "C-section."

A Caesarean birth might be necessary if the mother's pelvic opening is too small for the baby

to pass through, or if the mother's or baby's health is in danger, among other reasons.

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 might 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 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 number of your doctor, clinic, or hospital handy. Also, keep the phone number of a friend or relative nearby.
- Find out which hospital entrance you should use, especially at night, and where you should check in. 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 might feel more relaxed if you have a small bag packed

Don't be embarrassed to ask questions. You are entitled to know what to expect from your doctor and from the hospital.





and ready to go. It might 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 plenty of advantages:

- 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:

- 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:

- Do not use bumper pads in cribs because of the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Crib slats should be no more than $2\frac{3}{8}$ 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.
- Remove and replace damaged teething rails on used cribs.



- Remove all plastic packaging from new cribs. 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:

- two to three one-piece stretch suits or long gowns
- three to four small undershirts (those with snaps are easier)
- four pairs of pants
- Supply of newborn-sized disposable diapers or two dozen to three dozen cloth diapers
- four diaper pins for cloth diapers
- three to four cotton blankets
- one or two warmer blankets
- six burp cloths (frequently cloth diapers)

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