

# Bringing home baby: Tips from a first-time mom

By JENNIFER COSTLEY

I left the hospital with confidence. The kid came out totally normal and I was feeling pretty agile for someone who had just given birth (a feeling that dissipated later that afternoon when the last dose of hospital pain killers worked its way out of my system). Things didn't start to get sketchy until that evening when I read horror stories about the cute Rock'n'play I bought and all the babies that smothered themselves whilst sleeping in it. Flash forward to a long night of checking to make sure the baby's breathing. Sleep while she sleeps? Ha! Haven't you ever heard of SIDS? You can never sleep! All right, you get the idea. My confidence was shaken.

I thought I was prepared, but as it turns out babies are needy and first time moms are psychos. Below is a short list of things I didn't know, but wish I had.

## Prove thyself!

About a week before my due date realized I should probably learn about breastfeeding. I had been avoiding the task because I didn't want to look at diagrams of boobs but time was running out. Luckily a friend of mine was a former Le Leche League leader. She interlibrary loaned a whole slew of breastfeeding books for me (subtle library plug). These books taught me a few good positions for feeding your baby and important things like how often to do it. Boy, am I glad I did my homework! Did you know that not one but several



people in the hospital will ask you to demonstrate your ability to feed the baby? If you have a hospital birth you will have round-the-clock nurses and each one is gonna want to make sure baby gets what she needs. Also expect a lactation consultant making the rounds, who will want to see you feed your baby – and there is no faking it with this expert! The bad news: Actual breastfeeding is more awkward than looking at diagrams. The good news: The nurses and lactation consultants aren't there to give you a test, they're there to get you home with a variety of strategies and the confidence to ask for help if you need it.

## Carseat conundrums

One week post-hospital my partner flipped up the car seat cover for a goodbye baby kiss and was mortified to see the kid hunched forward in what was obviously not a safe position. She looked like she was hanging from the roof of an upside down vehicle. Newborns do not have the strength to keep their heads up in the seated position, so your carseat must be installed

at the right angle, with straps in the right position, to keep baby safe on the drive. After some long feelings of red hot shame I snapped a picture of baby in the car and sent it to a car seat technician from St. Anthony Hospital. A speedy response arrived: "No! She shouldn't look like that!" Then came instructions for

a quick temporary fix, followed by an immediate invitation to come back and have the car seat reinstalled. I was fortunate to know a girl who knows carseats but anyone can access this service. St. Anthony has several car seat technicians on hand. Give them a call and they will get you situated free of charge.

## The myth of newborn diapers

When people ask you what you need tell them newborn diapers. These suckers are nearly impossible to find. Walmart and Safeway have been sold out more times than I can count in the last eight weeks. Sizes 1-6 come in a variety of brands and prices. Newborn diapers, not so much. Collect these mythical devices in advance!

## Your baby may sound like a pug

Confession: my partner and I didn't know that sneezing is how infants clear their nose of left-over womb stuff. We kept a tally of sneezes on the whiteboard in the hospital until someone kindly informed us it was normal and she wasn't already sick. Still, during the first few weeks home she struggled



## Young Children

to breath at night. Tiny noses make for quick congestion. There are three tools you can purchase to help make baby comfortable while she grows into that nose. 1. Saline solution. 2. One of those terrible tools for sucking fluid from a baby's nose ... just Google it. 3. A wedge to place under the mattress of your crib or bassinet that elevates the baby's head.

## Buy these things or else

- Changing pad: This is common sense. Why didn't I just buy this?
- Diaper genie: You can literally stuff 40 dirty diapers in this thing and not smell a single one.
- Colic bottles: Gassy babies don't sleep.
- Gas drops: See above.
- Gripe water: Infants get hiccups easily. Gripe water is a magic hiccup healer.
- Carseat cover: Protect your baby from the sun and strangers.
- Bottle warmer: So she can scream for two minutes instead of five.
- Soothing gel pads. You'll know why when the time comes.

## Goathead stroller murder

You have finally gathered the courage to take your baby out into the world. You wrestle your stroller in and out of the car. You make sure baby won't be too cold or too hot. You find a nice Eastern Oregon park and you stroll gingerly along, appreciating the outdoors for the