

Chapter 1

Preparing for Baby

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Wondering about how life will be when Baby comes into the fold? Go ahead and make plans, but give yourself a lot of wiggle room. Counting on a baby to follow the plans you make months before delivery (concerning work, or vacations, or sleep, or even having a pleasant day) is like picking a random date and planning on having nice weather. You just don't know. You can't know until the time comes. Make several contingency plans for Baby's first weeks at home — sort of like having an umbrella handy.



The first year is an amazing time of growth (something your pediatrician will officially track at every well-baby visit) and development. When you hold your tiny infant in one arm, you'll hardly be able to imagine her balancing on her own feet in a matter of just 12 months' time, when she may also be learning to talk, eating real foods, and displaying signs of her true personality (which, to your delight or dismay, may mimic your own — or your partner's).

Adoptive parents face the same issues and challenges (along with some concerns unique to their situation) when it comes to seeing Baby through the first year — and beyond. This book is meant to be a guide for everyone who is taking on the total commitment involved with raising a child.

This chapter gives you an idea of what lies ahead — and where to look for information in this book.

Bracing Yourself for the Changes Ahead

So, you're all set to bring Baby home and jump into this gig known as parenting. You've thought about this for — well, what seems like forever; you've prepared yourself mentally; you know that your life is going to be different — but different in a *good* way.



No matter how long you've been dreaming, planning, and discussing this particular phase of life, you really can't ever know what it'll be like until you're actually going through it. You may bring home a mellow, quiet, easy-going child, or you may bring home someone who seems to have been sent to punish you for all the grief you gave your own parents.

Equipping yourself

Having all the right equipment can make life a heck of a lot easier, as can having the right people around to lend a helping hand. In the event that you've had a difficult delivery, or that your child just isn't sleeping the way you thought he would, having a good support system and accepting the fact that you need to take it easy for a while (as discussed in Chapter 5) can really help to ease your transition toward taking complete responsibility for this one little person.



Make your checklist (or wish list) early and keep track of what you have, what you don't have, and what you absolutely *must* have before you go into labor. Chapter 2 lists the necessities of new parenthood, from car seats to co-sleepers.

Keeping an open mind

The best advice for new parents may be this: Be flexible. Although you do want to educate yourself on life with a baby during your pregnancy, try not to settle on one particular idea of how things are going to be.



Babies are unpredictable. You could have a terrific first week at home, resting while Baby does little more than snooze in your arms only to find that Baby becomes fussy during the second and third weeks for no apparent reason. Maybe you're planning on going back to work after a month, but after a week of broken sleep and long days at home nursing your child 'round the clock, you're beginning to wonder how the heck you're going to meet that goal. Chapter 4 tells you about returning to work. Running even the simplest

errands with a newborn in tow can take twice as long as you may expect, and when fatigue and frustration (discussed in Chapter 5) hit, they can make you feel like you're down for the count. It's really not the case — you just need to regroup and recharge and figure out what works — and what doesn't.

Becoming a parent

Bonding with Baby (covered in more detail in Chapters 2 and 6) can often take two forms: immediate and absolute from the moment of this child's birth or gradual and intermittent. Nothing's wrong with you if you fall into the latter group. Sure, you may have been expecting to feel an instant connection to your child, but remember — he's a stranger to you. Don't berate yourself for not feeling like a parent immediately. The feeling *will* come to you — you can bet the farm on it — and after it does (or even before), you may wonder how you can be trusted to care for this beautiful child.

If your baby comes with special needs or if he gets sick or injured, you have an even more challenging set of circumstances to handle (but, trust us, you can do it). Turn to Chapter 18 of this book to find out more about how to care for Baby when everything isn't perfect.



Parenting is sometimes an overwhelming responsibility, especially in a year filled with firsts. Although countless changes are headed your way with the introduction of a child into your home, there won't be anything you can't handle. Repeat this mantra every morning, noon, and night if you need to — because it's the truth.

Planning for Life with Baby

Setting up Baby's bassinet and swing are good starts to preparing for the big day when your family welcomes the little one home — however, many other issues are worth discussing before Baby takes center stage, such as:

- ✓ Are you breastfeeding or bottlefeeding? (Read Chapter 2 for an overview of each.)
- ✓ Which partner is going to be the primary caregiver? If both of you are going to work full-time, who's going to take charge of feeding and clothing everyone? Will there be an equal division of household and Baby duties or will another arrangement work better? (Chapter 4 discusses some of these topics.)
- ✓ Is there anything you can do to prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)? (Chapter 20 has advice on this.)

- ✔ Do you expect to make frequent trips with Baby? (Chapter 3 offers some tips for smooth traveling.)
- ✔ Do you know the Heimlich maneuver for babies? How about infant CPR? (Chapter 20 goes over this.)
- ✔ If you're returning to work, what kind of day-care arrangements should you make? (Chapter 4 again.)
- ✔ Who do you accept help from, and who do you turn away at the door? (Chapter 5 advises you in this matter.)
- ✔ How do you deal with family members who happen to disagree with your parenting philosophies? (See Chapter 14.)
- ✔ What's your take on spanking? How about your partner's view of it? (Chapter 17 gives advice for handling discipline in an age-appropriate manner.)
- ✔ When do you begin preparing your home to be baby-safe? Before you know it, Baby will be rolling, crawling, mouthing, and pulling up on *everything*. (Chapter 20 gives advice for baby-proofing your house.)

Of course, you must consider much, much more to prepare yourself — and your life, and your home — for the arrival of your child. These major concerns are really just the tip of the iceberg, as you'll find after the first year really gets rolling.

Choosing a Pediatrician

Planning on choosing a doc from the Yellow Pages? Don't. Buying space in the phone book isn't an indication of how qualified a doctor is — no matter how big and fancy the ad. With just a little research, you're much more likely to find the right pediatrician.



The first thing you want to decide is what kind of doctor you're looking for. You have two options:

- ✔ **A pediatrician** specializes solely in children; he followed up medical school with three more years of training in the care of babies, children, and adolescents. Board-certified pediatricians have taken an exam demonstrating their vast knowledge of the health and well-being of their prospective patients.
- ✔ **A general practitioner** sees a much broader range of patients and may, in fact, be able to take care of your entire family (a big bonus if you're frequently ill). On the downside, he may not know as much about less common conditions in an infant (though if he sees a lot of infants in his practice, he may be very informed on the latest issues).



Ask your friends, neighbors, co-workers, and obstetrician — anyone you know who has kids and/or *whose opinion you respect* — for the names of good baby doctors.

Make sure the doctors on your short list accept your insurance, and then set up an interview with one or more of them. Some doctors don't charge for this meeting; others do. Ask about the fee when you make the appointment.



During your interview, you need to find out the following:



- ✓ **What's the doctor's educational background?** Did he attend medical school in another country, for example? You need to do your research and make sure that the requirements for graduation there are as stringent as they are in the U.S. Also find out whether the doctor is board certified. A doctor who isn't board certified in pediatrics isn't necessarily incompetent; certification simply means that this physician has completed extra training and assessment (beyond the minimum requirements) by a board of experts in the field.
- ✓ **What's his child-rearing philosophy?** Does it mesh with yours?
- ✓ **What's his take on the use of antibiotics for infections?** Some doctors nowadays are taking more of a wait-and-see approach to ear infections, for example, to allow them to clear up by themselves. You may love this approach to medicine, or you may be completely opposed to it. It's best to know *now* how an ear infection will be treated so that you don't find yourself at odds with your doctor when the situation arises.
- ✓ **How many doctors are in the practice?** Will you be able to see your doctor for all well-baby visits? Who will see Baby when he's sick? You may be expecting to see this particular doctor at every single well- and sick-baby visit. That's just not the case in many practices, at least as far as sick calls go. You may need to see the doctor on call (who may be someone you don't know).
- ✓ **What are the office hours?** If you work full-time you may want to look for a practice with evening or weekend hours for well-baby checkups. Many practices have a scheduled time where a doctor or nurse answers routine questions that don't require an office visit (such as the recommended dosage of cold medicine for Baby's age and weight, or how to treat diaper rash).
- ✓ **If he's a solo practitioner, who covers his office when he takes vacation?** You want to know that you have a reliable place to take your sick baby when your doctor is out of town.



Tell the doctor if you're concerned or confused about immunizing Baby. Some physicians won't take on a child who isn't going to be immunized. (For more on immunization, see Chapter 18.)

Another important consideration: How convenient is the doctor's office to your home? Driving 20 minutes to see the pediatrician may seem like an adventure to you right now, but the first time you have a sick child on your hands, all you'll want to do is get him in, get him out, and get him home. (Not to mention that if you have more kids in the years to come, dragging two or three sick kids across town to see the doctor becomes even more of a challenge). You can plan on being at the doctor's office plenty over the course of the first year in any event, because your child will have well-baby visits scheduled at 2 weeks or 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, and 12 months.

Adopting

Although some of the advice in this book centers on a new mom's recovery from childbirth, it isn't meant to exclude adoptive parents. You're taking on the same role as any new parent and facing the same issues during the first year.



In today's open adoptions, birth mothers are sometimes included and/or kept informed of Baby's well-being. This is a good thing for your child: First, the circle of people who adore her is only made larger (and can it ever really be too large?), and secondly, she'll never question where she came from or what kind of medical history she may have.

Bonding sometimes seems to be of particular concern for adoptive parents. But bonding can be a challenge for biological parents, as well. And of course, during this first year, you'll work on achieving that first full night's sleep, on feeding Baby, and on developing her motor and communication skills. One thing is certain: As moms and dads, all of us are in the same boat when it comes to learning about and meeting the basic needs of our kids.

Looking Ahead: Baby's First Year in a Nutshell

You won't believe how much Baby accomplishes during his first year. Almost before your eyes, he transforms from a helpless sleeping and eating machine into an independent, curious toddler who's talking and walking and even telling you "no." Along the way from dependent blob to busy 1-year-old, you can expect Baby to reach the following exciting milestones:

- ✓ Baby melts your heart with his **first smile** at about 6 weeks.
- ✓ Baby may begin to **sleep through the night** as early as the second month, or after he weighs 10 to 15 pounds.

- ✓ At about 3 months, not only does he start **cooing** and get his first taste of mobility by **rolling over**, but — much to your relief, no doubt — he's likely to **conquer colic**.
- ✓ Listen for his first real **belly laugh** to come at about 3 months.
- ✓ Watch for Baby to start **holding up his head** for short periods of time — and to start **putting everything in his mouth** — during the fourth month.
- ✓ At 5 months, Baby becomes a little ball of personality, **showing different emotions** throughout the day, such as happiness (by smiling and laughing), anger (by voicing his anger when you remove an object from his reach), and interest (by attempting to mimic your voice).
- ✓ Late in the sixth month, Baby may start **sitting up by himself** and even **crawling** or **scooting** (or propelling himself across the floor in some other creative manner).
- ✓ During the seventh month (Chapter 12), Baby's communication skills take off as he begins to **babble**.
- ✓ He becomes mobile one way or another during the eighth month, whether he's just beginning to **crawl**, or he begins **pulling up** and **cruising** around your family room.
- ✓ When Baby is around 9 months, he may suddenly start **clinging to a special toy**, blanket, or other security object, as he begins to realize that he isn't actually part of *you*.
- ✓ His **comprehension of language** blossoms during the tenth month, when he's able to demonstrate an understanding of what you're saying to him.
- ✓ During the eleventh and twelfth months Baby will **refine the skills** he's already been demonstrating — namely **language** and **locomotion**.

