

# Baby stuff – a bloke's guide

**You'll need some baby stuff when your child arrives and this can cost a fortune. Here's a quick guide on what you'll need and what you can skip.**

by Lucy Perry

Lucy is not a baby products expert, she's just a mum who's been there before.

**You will need a baby car seat from day one.** A standard baby seat will last you until your child is 4 while a capsule has a short life. If your partner has a Caesarean, she won't even be able to pick up the capsule for 6 weeks. When not in the car, your baby wants to be wrapped in YOU, not a plastic capsule, so buy a baby sling for carrying your baby close to your body. The Baby Bjorn carriers leave limbs dangling when babies want to be bundled up as they were before they were born. Go for a sling that keeps bubs close to your body. Hug-a-bub is a good model.

**You'll need a change table** and Ikea does a good, simple, cheap model. A chest of drawers that fits a change mat on top is also fine and then you have a useful piece of furniture as your child grows up.

You'll need to **make a decision on what kind of nappies** to use. There is a really good article on the Nature's Child website at [www.natureschild.com.au](http://www.natureschild.com.au) then click on the "Which nappy for you?" heading under "Free Services". Go for whatever suits you and your family.

**You will need a cot** at some point, even if you co-sleep at first. Do not purchase pillows, doonas or cot bumpers. These are all SIDS no-nos. Newborns like to be wrapped up tightly at first. After a couple of months, a zip up sleeping bag is ideal as bub can't kick off the covers. Gro-bag is a good model. For info on SIDS visit [www.sidsandkids.org](http://www.sidsandkids.org).

**You really don't need a purpose-made nappy bag.** Any good backpack or shoulder bag with a few compartments will do the job (and look less Mumsy for Dad). You'll need to carry nappies, wipes, rash cream and a change of clothes for bub. If you're bottle-feeding you'll also need bottles filled with sterile water and formula, which you mix up as you use it. Otherwise, make sure Mum's boobs are always with you!

**Don't bother with a baby bath.** Your baby will out grow it within weeks. Newborns should not be bathed everyday as their umbilical stump needs to dry out and fall off. Every two or three days is fine, as long as you're wiping bubs well after nappy changes. Don't use soapy bath products! Your newborn's skin is very fragile and shouldn't be stripped of its natural oils with nasty soap products. Bath your baby in the bathroom sink with a few drops of almond oil in the water. Even better, get naked and get into the bath (not the sink) with your baby but make sure the water is not too hot.

**You'll need a pram** but you really don't need a 20kg 4WD model with disc brakes. This item is a work horse and should be simple and light. A narrow model makes navigating the shops easier. A hood is handy for draping a cotton wrap over so that your baby can snooze while you cruise the shops. Go for a model that has two separate handles as opposed to a bar joining the two handles across the back. Two handles gives you somewhere to hang your shopping bags but make sure the model you choose is not prone to tipping if weight is added to the handles. Remember that your baby is happier wrapped in

YOU so use your baby sling until your baby is getting too heavy to cart around the shops.

Once your baby is starting to engage with the world, there's a whole new range of products to consider! Newborns just want to sleep, eat and be cuddled but as they start to look around and reach out for things it's **TOY TIME** for your baby!

**A play mat is a must have.** The kind that has a padded mat with two curved bars dangling toys over the top is good for babies not sitting up yet. Colours should be bright and contrasting to make the most of a young baby's sight. Lamaze makes good items for this age.

**Steer clear of sit-in walkers and jumpers.** The kind of walker that lets babies sit in them with wheels to scoot around the house has been linked with many deaths. Jumpers have been proved to be bad for your baby's ligament development.

**Take great care when choosing babies bottles.** The most popular brands of babies bottles in Australia are made of polycarbonate and these plastics leach a chemical (BPA) that mimics oestrogen and causes breast cancer among other things. So why aren't these evil plastics banned? Go figure. Just be sure to choose BPA-free plastics for your child from day one.

Once your baby can sit up and is starting to eat solids (usually at about 6 or 7 months old) **you'll need a high chair.** These are the ugliest pieces of furniture ever invented. Ikea does a cheap version that's not too hideous. You can also buy plastic chairs that strap on to your existing dining room chairs and these are handy to take with you when you go visiting friends and know you'll need to feed your baby a meal.

Only once your baby is crawling will you need to **child-proof your house.** You will go mad if you put baby locks on every drawer and cupboard and barriers on every doorway. Just move the cleaning chemicals and other dangers (such as glass and booze) to higher cupboards and consider child-proof gates for the stairs. As soon as your baby is walking, it's time to teach the boundaries for safe living!

**Whatever you buy for your baby, make sure that it meets Australian Standards.** Just because a product is sold in Australia, doesn't mean it is not dangerous and won't cause injury or death so double check that anything you buy has an Australian Standards rating. Also take notice of the age rating of all products. Anything that says for age three and up probably has small parts that can be a choking hazard.

Some large baby chain stores offer a one year **discount card** if you spend over a certain amount in one go. So if you buy all your big items together, you can earn yourself a discount on purchases for the next year.

Enjoy the baby stuff phase - it'll be over before you know it.