

Newborn Essentials Checklist

About 35 items cover almost everything your baby will use in the first eight weeks. Print this, tick as you go, and ignore the 200-item lists. Safety guidance follows AAP and IAP. Where India and the US differ on law or climate, it is flagged.

The four sleep rules that override every other decision

1. **Back to sleep, every sleep.** Naps included. No exceptions.
2. **Firm, flat, non-inclined surface.** A crib, bassinet, play yard or traditional cradle. Not a swing, not a lounger, not a car seat indoors, not a couch.
3. **Nothing else in the sleep space.** A fitted sheet and the baby. No bumpers, blankets, pillows, positioners, stuffed animals or weighted sleepers.
4. **Share a room, not a bed,** for at least the first six months. If night feeds happen in bed, feed there and move your baby back to their own firm, flat surface afterwards. This matters most when an adult in the bed is exhausted, on sedating medication, or has had alcohol.

A jhula or palna counts, with the same rules: firm fitted mattress, breathable cotton, no extra padding, secure hanging setup checked before every use, never unattended while swinging. If a product photo shows a baby asleep in something cushioned and cosy, read that image as a warning.

Must-have — buy before week 34

SAFE SLEEP

- ☐ **Crib, bassinet, play yard or cradle** 1
Firm, flat mattress that fits snugly with no gap at the edges.
- ☐ **Fitted sheets, breathable cotton** 2-3
- ☐ **Waterproof mattress protectors** 2
Overnight blowouts are routine.
- ☐ **Swaddles with velcro or a zip** 2-3
Loose blankets are unsafe in the sleep space.
- ☐ **Wearable sleep sacks** 1-2
For when your baby breaks out of the swaddle around week 8.
- ☐ **Mosquito net frame or canopy** 1
Where mosquito-borne illness is a concern. A flat mattress with a net frame over it, not a padded nest with built-up walls.

FEEDING — IF YOU ARE NURSING

- ☐ **Nursing pillow** 1
- ☐ **Nursing bras or feeding blouses** 3
- ☐ **Breast pads** 1 box
- ☐ **Lanolin-based nipple cream** 1
Early soreness is common; persistent pain is not. Get the latch checked.
- ☐ **Feeding cover (optional)** 1
Comfort, not safety.

FEEDING — IF YOU ARE FORMULA OR COMBINATION FEEDING

- ☐ **Bottles with slow-flow nipples** 6-8
- ☐ **Bottle brush and small parts brush** 1 each
- ☐ **Drying rack** 1

FEEDING — EITHER WAY

- ☐ **Backup bottles** 2-4
Even if you plan to nurse exclusively. Buy one or two brands, not a full set, since you cannot predict which nipple shape yours will accept.
- ☐ **Newborn formula, one small pack** 1
A backup is not a failure of commitment. It stops day three turning into a crisis.
- ☐ **Steriliser** if needed
Where tap water is reliably potable, a dishwasher sanitise cycle or one boil before first use covers a healthy full-term baby. Where it is not, this is not the corner to cut. Premies and immunocompromised infants need daily sterilising either way.
- ☐ **Muslin cloths** 8-10
Burp cloth, light swaddle, spit-up wipe, pram sun cover, makeshift changing surface. Most parents name these as the thing they reached for most.

Not yet: skip the bottle warmer and the formula mixer, and leave the pump until your routine settles.

DIAPERING

- ☐ **Diapers, cloth nappies or langots** ~300
If disposable, roughly 300 to start at 10–12 changes a day. Buy small boxes of two brands rather than one stockpile, since skin reacts differently to each.
- ☐ **Wipes** — fragrance-free, water-based, no alcohol 4–6 packs
- ☐ **Zinc oxide diaper cream** 1 large
- ☐ **Portable, wipeable changing pad** 1
- ☐ **Waterproof changing pad covers** or a stack of receiving blankets 2

CLOTHING

- ☐ **Bodysuits or sleepsuits**, newborn and 0–3 month sizes 5–8
Mix snaps and zips, then notice how much faster the zips are at 3 AM.
- ☐ **Hats** — one warm, one with a brim 2
Cap on at birth, cap off for sleep. Never cover the head during sleep.
- ☐ **Socks or grippy booties** 6 pairs
- ☐ **Weather-appropriate outer layer**, if you are somewhere cool 1
- ☐ **Fragrance-free laundry detergent** 1
Residue is a common and avoidable cause of newborn rashes. Your existing free-and-clear is fine.
- ☐ **Scratch mittens** (optional) —
Trimming the nails is the fix that works.

Newborns grow out of sizes in weeks, not months, so resist a full wardrobe upfront. Gifts cover more than you expect.

BATHING AND CORD CARE

- ☐ **Infant tub or bath insert**, or a clean sink 1
- ☐ **Soft washcloth and mild baby wash** 1 each
- ☐ **Nail file or baby-safe clippers** 1
Newborn nails are sharp and grow fast.
- ☐ **Bath thermometer** (optional) 1
Water at 37–38°C (98–100°F). Test with your elbow or a thermometer, since hands read temperature less precisely.

Until the cord stump falls off — usually one to three weeks — sponge baths only. Keep the area dry. Routine alcohol on the stump has fallen out of favour, so check with your pediatrician.

GETTING OUT OF THE HOUSE

- ☐ **Rear-facing infant car seat** — installed and checked before your first car trip 1
The highest-impact safety purchase on the list. **US**: hospitals typically will not discharge you without one fitted, and many fire stations do free installation checks. **India**: a legal requirement too, under CMVR Rule 138(1A), amended 2022, with a penalty under MV Act Section 194B. Enforcement outside the major metros is patchy. The safety case holds anyway. Never buy a used seat with an unknown history.
- ☐ **Carrier or wrap** 1
Newborns settle against a chest, and you will want your hands back. A structured one can wait until month three.
- ☐ **Changing kit that lives in a bag by the door** 1
Six diapers, travel wipes, a portable pad, a spare sleeper. Any backpack works.

HEALTH AND FIRST AID

- ☐ **Digital thermometer** 1
For newborns, a rectal reading is still the accurate one. Keep it somewhere you can find in the dark.
- ☐ **Nasal aspirator** — bulb or manual suction 1
- ☐ **Saline drops** 1
These two get used more than you expect once the first cold arrives.
- ☐ **Infant paracetamol / acetaminophen** 1
Your pediatrician gives the dose by weight. Do not guess from the box.

That is the whole must-have list. Around 35 things. You can stop shopping.

Nice to have — buy these after the baby arrives

None of this is urgent, and all of it is easier to choose once you know your baby.

- ☐ **A second carrier or wrap**
Useful when the first one is in the wash.
- ☐ **Baby monitor**
Only once your baby sleeps in a separate room, which is not month one. Audio is enough, and a monitor is a convenience rather than a safety device.
- ☐ **White noise machine**
Your phone works. So does a cheap unit.
- ☐ **Diaper caddy**
Keeps supplies where you change your baby, not where you planned to.
- ☐ **Bouncer or swing**
Borrow before buying. Plenty of babies want to be held instead.
- ☐ **Stroller or pram**
A carrier covers the first couple of months, which buys you time to test push handles in a shop.
- ☐ **Diaper pail**
A lidded kitchen bin does this. The refill cartridges are the real cost.
- ☐ **Pacifiers, two or three shapes**
Most guidance suggests waiting until nursing is established, around week three.
- ☐ **Breast pump**
No point choosing one before you know your supply and your schedule. **US:** insurance often covers it.
- ☐ **Hooded towel**
Any soft towel works. The hood is convenient.
- ☐ **Glider or rocking chair**
If you own a comfortable armchair, you own a glider.

When to buy what

WEEKS	WHAT TO DO
20–24	Research. Build the list. Compare car seats and strollers while you still have the energy.
28–32	Buy the big items: car seat, crib or cradle, mattress, stroller if you have decided. Leave two to three weeks for delivery and the fitting check.
32–36	Buy consumables. Wash everything. Set up the sleep space and the mosquito net.
36 onward	Pack the hospital bag, confirm the car seat is fitted, freeze some meals.
0–8	Buy nothing you had not already planned for. Watch your baby instead.

What this actually costs

TIER	WHAT IT COVERS	SHARE OF BUDGET
Must-have	Safe sleep, car seat, diapers, feeding basics, clothing, bathing, first aid	About 70%
Nice-to-have	Stroller, monitor, carrier upgrade, pump, caddy	About 20%
Buffer	The brand your baby accepts, and the 3 AM purchase you cannot talk yourself out of	About 10%

Indicatively, roughly ₹40,000–₹90,000 in India or \$1,000–\$2,000 in the US for a first baby, if you leave the skip list alone. The car seat and the sleep surface are the two places not to economise. Everything else has a reasonable version at a third of the headline price.

Before you spend anything: hand-me-downs work for clothing, bouncers, cradles and bassinets, as long as you check the model against recall notices. **Car seats are the exception** — never take a used one with an unknown history. Baby showers and godh bharai reliably produce more clothes than any newborn can wear. **US:** health insurance frequently covers a breast pump, so call your provider around week 20.

Wait two weeks before buying anything optional. The swing you were certain about may be the thing your baby screams in. One bottle brand may be the only one they accept, and you will not know which until day five. You do not know this baby yet. Two weeks will tell you more than any review.

Skip these, with no guilt at all

Every one of these shows up on popular checklists. Some are safety problems. The rest do not do what they promise.

ITEM	WHY TO SKIP IT
Crib bumpers, mesh included	Suffocation risk. Restricted or banned in several countries.
Sleep positioners and infant loungers	No evidence they reduce risk, and flagged as a suffocation hazard.
Home breathing monitors for healthy babies	Not shown to reduce risk. The FDA calls consumer versions unapproved medical devices.
Baby walkers	Fall and stair injury risk, and they do not help babies walk sooner.
Teething necklaces, amber or otherwise	No evidence they relieve pain, and a real strangulation risk.
Automatic formula-mixing dispensers	Enough reports of wrong mixing ratios that pediatric groups advise against them.
Sunscreen under six months	The FDA and AAP both advise against it. Shade, a brimmed hat and long sleeves do the job.
Wipe warmer	Rarely necessary in a warm climate, skippable in a cold one.
Bottle warmer	A mug of warm water does it in two minutes.
Crib bedding sets with quilts and pillows	Same reason as bumpers. The bare sleep space is the safe one.
Baby shoes under six months	Stiff soles work against normal foot development. Gripply socks are better.
Standalone changing table	Any dresser plus a changing pad works.
Crib mobile	Your newborn cannot focus on it. A tummy-time toy later is better.
Baby food maker	Your blender does this, four months from now.
Bulk newborn-size clothing	Many babies outgrow the size in two or three weeks.
Expensive going-home outfit	It will be spat on within the hour. Use a sleeper.
Bathtub with built-in thermometer	Test the water with your elbow.

Signs to call the pediatrician

- **A fever over 38°C (100.4°F) in a baby under three months. This is an emergency. Go in.**
- Fewer than six wet diapers in 24 hours after day five.
- Refusing to feed for more than eight hours.
- Yellowing skin that spreads downward.
- Laboured breathing, blue lips or unusual lethargy.

Keep the thermometer somewhere you can find it in the dark, and put your pediatrician's after-hours number in your phone now. Sustained inconsolable crying is worth a call too, though most of it is normal.

The short version. If a product touches where your baby sleeps, keep it plain and empty. For feeding, clothing and getting around, buy the basics and add convenience once you know your baby's habits. An expensive smart bassinet will not make you a better parent than a plain one that meets the same safety standard. If you have budget left after the must-have list, the postpartum weeks are where it does the most work: prepared meals, a night of help, a lactation consultant, a doula.

Sources: AAP / HealthyChildren.org, A Parent's Guide to Safe Sleep · AAP, *Pediatrics*, Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations · Indian Academy of Pediatrics, Guidelines for Parents · US CPSC, Safe Sleep: Cribs and Infant Products · Federal Register, Ban of Crib Bumpers (2023 final rule) · MoRTH, Central Motor Vehicle Rules Rule 138; MV Act Section 194B · WHO, Thermal Protection of the Newborn · NHS, How to Dress a Newborn Baby · FDA, Should You Put Sunscreen on Infants? Not Usually · FDA, warning on unapproved infant cardiopulmonary monitors · ParentData (Emily Oster), The Best Baby Items and the Worst, 2024 parent survey.

General information, not medical advice. Talk to your pediatrician about your baby's specific needs.