What to expect the FIRST MONTH

What to expect the first month

NURTURING your baby’s brain
Breast and bottle FEEDING TIPS
Building FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
Is your BUDGET ready for baby?

THINK SAFETY in your home & car
Finding quality CHILD CARE

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Welcome!

Dear parent,

Congratulations on the birth of your new baby! This is certainly a time to treasure as your infant brings excitement and joy into your family.

As is the case for all parents, this can also be a time of stress. Because every baby is different, parenting is not something that just comes naturally. Instead, parenting is learned, often through trial and error. Like so many parents, you will find yourself turning to various resources – like family, friends, doctors, books, TV, and the Internet – for advice on what to expect and do as your infant grows older.

We in Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension at the University of Georgia also want to support you and your family as it grows over the years. This publication, Guide for New Parents, is just an introduction to some of the educational resources we have available to help you now during your transition to parenthood. Our programs place non-biased, research-based information at your fingertips. County agents and specialists throughout the state provide up-to-date knowledge on many topics, including child development, parenting, personal financial management, home and food safety, and nutrition and health.

Turn to the local experts when you need the answers that matter most in your life. Call your county Cooperative Extension office at 1-800-ASK-UGA1 (275-8421) and ask for your Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, or visit our Web site at www.gafamilies.org for more information.

We look forward to supporting you and your growing family!

Family & Consumer Sciences, UGA Cooperative Extension

Guide for New Parents
Produced by
Family & Consumer Sciences
UGA Cooperative Extension

Editor
Ted G. Futris, PhD
Extension Family Life Specialist

Assistant Editor
H. Marissa Stone, MS, Former Graduate Student
Department of Child and Family Development

Copy Editor
Stephanie W. Schupska,
UGA Cooperative Extension Public Relations News Editor

Contributing Authors
Jorge H. Atiles, PhD
Extension Housing Specialist
Diane Bakes, PhD
Extension Early Childhood Specialist
Dan Bower, PhD
Extension Child and Family Specialist
Connie Crawley, MS, RD, LD
Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialist
Leigh Elsheimer
UGA Traffic Injury Prevention Institute
Ted G. Futris, PhD
Extension Family Life Specialist
Gail M. Hamula, EdD, RD, LD
Extension Nutrition and EFNEP Specialist
Judy A. Harrison, PhD
Extension Food Safety Specialist
Sara Hendrix, MS, RD, Former Graduate Student
Department of Foods and Nutrition
Melba King
UGA Traffic Injury Prevention Institute
Joan Koence, PhD, AFC
Extension Financial Management Specialist
Gina G. Peek, PhD, Former Graduate Student
Housing and Consumer Economics
Mary Ann Robinson
UGA Traffic Injury Prevention Institute
Michael Rapadas, MS, AFC
Extension Consumer Economics Specialist
H. Marissa Stone, MS, Former Graduate Student
Department of Child and Family Development
Pamela R. Turner, PhD
Extension Housing Specialist

Designed and Printed by UGA Printing
William Reeves, Senior Graphic Designer
Max Harrell, Manager
Images from iStockphoto.com

If you would like more information about this publication please contact Ted Futris at tfutris@uga.edu or 706-542-7566.

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THIRD PRINTING
**What to Expect During Your Baby's First Month**

The first month of your baby's life is full of changes. Many new parents have questions about how to help your new arrival settle into the family. Here are some of the basics to expect during the first month of life. Remember that every baby is unique. Check with your pediatrician if you have questions or concerns about your baby's development.

### The Neonatal Period

The first month of life is called the neonatal period. During this time your baby will probably have reddish, wrinkled skin and tightly curled hands. She may have an elongated or bumpy head due to coming through the birth canal during delivery (unless you had a C-section). She may breathe noisily at first because she’s just learning how to breathe.

You have probably noticed the soft spot on top of your baby’s head where the skull bones have not yet joined. This is normal. Baby’s skull was soft to allow the skull bones to grow together between 12 and 18 months.

### Seeing and Hearing

Your baby's hearing is already well developed at birth. Babies especially enjoy looking at other faces, so talk and sing face-to-face. Newborn babies may cry as much as two hours every day. Babies cry when they are hungry, sleepy, uncomfortable, or need a diaper change. As your baby gets older, she may also cry because she wants attention. As a parent, you will learn your baby’s different cries and what she wants when she cries.

Respond to your baby’s needs every time she cries. Picking up a baby when she cries will not spoil her. Babies need to know that they can trust their parents to take care of their needs. Responding quickly and calmly when your baby cries teaches her that her world is safe and predictable.

### Smell, Touch & Taste

- **Black & White:** Prefers high-contrast colors and black & white.
- **Prefers human face:**prefers human face.
- **Prefers focuses on things 8-12 inches away:**prefers touches on the cheek.
- **Prefers sounds and voices:**prefers sweet smells and tastes over bitter or acidic ones.
- **Prefers soft sensations & handling:**prefers familiar sounds and voices.
- **Prefers handling over rough or abrupt ones:**prefers soft sensations & handling over rough or abrupt ones.

#### Movement

- **Prefers human milk:**prefers human milk.
- **Prefers sweet smells and tastes over bitter or acidic ones:**prefers sweet smells and tastes over bitter or acidic ones.
- **Prefers positioning of hands:**prefers positioning of hands.
- **Prefers positioning of feet touching a hard surface:**prefers positioning of feet touching a hard surface.
- **Little control of arm, hand, and leg movements:**little control of arm, hand, and leg movements.
- **Prefers positioning of head:**head will flop back if unsupported.

### Reflexes

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- **Little control of arm, hand, and leg movements:**little control of arm, hand, and leg movements.
- **Head will flop back if unsupported:**head will flop back if unsupported.

### Crying

When your baby is a newborn, crying is her only way to communicate. Newborn babies may cry as much as two hours every day.

- **Babies cry when they are hungry:**Babies cry when they are hungry, sleepy, uncomfortable, or need a diaper change.
- **Babies cry when they are hungry:**Babies cry when they are hungry, sleepy, uncomfortable, or need a diaper change.

### Exploring the World

From the time they are born, babies are curious about the world around them. You can help your baby learn about her environment. Hold her, pat her, and cuddle her. This will help your baby feel more secure and learn to trust. Use soft tones of voice. Read books out loud, starting as soon as she is born. Reading helps babies learn language, and in newborn babies, crying is the baby's only way to communicate. Newborn babies may cry as much as two hours every day.

- **Respond to your baby’s needs every time she cries.**Respond to your baby’s needs every time she cries. Picking up a baby when she cries will not spoil her.
- **Babies need to know that they can trust their parents to take care of their needs.**Babies need to know that they can trust their parents to take care of their needs.
- **To respond to your baby's needs every time she cries.**Respond to your baby’s needs every time she cries. Picking up a baby when she cries will not spoil her.

### Emotional Growth

One of the first negative emotions a baby feels is fear. If she dislikes a bath, she may become tenser. Try making it enjoyable by giving her a pacifier, walking with her, or playing soothing music. Some babies seem to calm down when riding in a car or when wrapped snugly in a blanket. Time spent comforting your baby is good for his emotional growth.
Building a Bright Future: Nurturing Your Baby’s Brain

The early years are critical for your child’s brain development. What happens or doesn’t happen during your baby’s first few years makes a big difference in your child’s life. Thanks to new technologies, we now know that the brain is far from fully developed at birth. A baby’s brain goes through some dramatic changes in the early years of life. And everything that happens in the brain depends on a baby’s experiences. What your baby sees, hears, touches, smells, and tastes can actually influence the wiring in your baby’s brain and can have dramatic effects on your child’s later development.

Wiring the Brain
Your baby is born with more than 100 billion brain cells, or neurons. The neurons that control basic processes such as breathing and digestion are connected at birth. But much of the brain’s wiring does not develop until after birth. In the first months and years of life, brain cells form complex connections in many parts of the brain that shape our thinking, feelings, and behaviors.

During these early years, the brain makes many more connections than the baby will ever need. But the brain is also efficient at weeding out connections that are not used regularly, so that the most-used ones have more room to grow.

The Importance of Experience
From the moment a baby is born, everything she sees, hears, touches, and feels helps build the connections that guide development. No two brains are alike. Each child’s brain develops individual pathways to deal with his or her experiences. Parents who talk and read to their babies are helping them develop important language connections. And parents who respond sensitively to their baby’s cries are building the emotional connections that lead to healthier relationships.

What Can You Do?
Parents and other caregivers can help babies gain the experiences they need for healthy brain development. Here are some ways you can help your baby’s brain develop:

- Keep your baby’s world safe and secure. Remove any safety hazards from the environment. Respond lovingly and consistently every time your baby cries. Give her attention. A baby feels stress when the environment is dangerous or when caregivers do not respond to her. Stress can slow brain development.
- Talk to your baby. When she makes a sound, repeat it. Smile at her. Talk about the things you’re doing together. Interacting face-to-face builds the brain connections needed for both language skills and a healthy emotional bond.
- Start reading aloud right away. Hearing adults read helps the brain develop language connections. It also gives parents and babies a chance to spend time together. And reading aloud helps your baby build a lifelong love of books.
- Choose high-quality child care. Babies need sensitive, loving care, and stimulating experiences, both in and out of the home. Choose a child care provider who interacts warmly with your baby and spends time with him one-on-one. Look for a safe and clean environment, a low baby-to-adult ratio, a caregiver who understands how children grow and develop, and a rich variety of age-appropriate toys.
- Get the information you need. If you have questions about your baby’s development, there are many places you can go for answers. Ask your doctor questions during check-ups. Have your librarian recommend good books on child development. Contact the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent in your county Extension office for more information on parenting.

The Bottom Line
Building your baby’s brain doesn’t require expensive materials or complicated activities. What’s most important is the time and energy you spend nurturing your baby. By reading to her, singing songs, holding her securely, smiling and laughing with her, and responding every time she cries, you are helping her brain form the networks of connections needed to become a healthy, happy child.

Diane Bales, Child & Family Development, UGA

What Happens or Doesn’t Happen during Your Baby’s First Few Years Makes a Big Difference in Your Child’s Life.
Breast-feeding is the healthiest way to feed your baby. Breast milk has all the nutrients your baby needs in just the right amounts. In fact, it has antibodies from your body which can help keep your baby from getting sick. Breast milk provides everything most babies need to build a healthy brain and grow properly for the first six months of life. Also, hormones released during breast-feeding help a mother feel extra close to her child.

While breast-feeding is a natural process, it’s a skill that you have to learn. At one time, daughters learned from mothers and other female family members how to breast-feed. Now that is not always the case, but experts are available to help you. Many hospitals and health departments have lactation consultants, people who work directly with you to help you learn to breast-feed, and you can find breast-feeding support groups in many counties in Georgia. Support and education are the keys to successful breast-feeding. Here are some tips to help get your started.

Nurse Often The more you nurse, the more milk you will have. Nurse as soon as you can after delivery. A breast-fed baby will nurse at least every two hours. If your baby does not nurse after four hours, wake him up to feed. If he is sleepy or falls asleep, unsnap him and play with his feet or wash his face until he begins to feed. Your baby will hit several growth spurts during the first 2 months of life. During this time your baby may nurse as often as every 30 minutes as he builds his milk supply to fit his growing needs. He may then abruptly slow down on feedings and go back to a “normal” feeding schedule. This abrupt increase in feeding time does not mean your baby is not getting enough to eat. As long as your baby continues to use enough diapers during the day and continues to grow, your body is producing the required amount of milk, and your baby is getting plenty to eat.

Count wet/soiled diapers to be sure you have enough milk. For the first day or two, your baby may only have 2-3 wet diapers. However, once your milk comes in your baby will have at least 6-8 wet cloth diapers or 5-6 wet disposable ones.

Do not give any other fluid but breast milk for the first six months of life unless directed by your pediatrician. There is no need for water or juice in a bottle. Offer these later when your baby is able to drink from a cup.

Nurse Often

Comfort Is Key

Your baby will hit several growth spurts during the first 2 months of life. During this time your baby may nurse as often as every 30 minutes as he builds his milk supply to fit his growing needs. He may then abruptly slow down on feedings and go back to a “normal” feeding schedule. This abrupt increase in feeding time does not mean your baby is not getting enough to eat. As long as your baby continues to use enough diapers during the day and continues to grow, your body is producing the required amount of milk, and your baby is getting plenty to eat.

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Comfort Is Key

Nurse your baby in a comfortable, calm place. Use pillows to support your back and something like a boppy pillow that wraps around to support your baby. Also, nursing in different positions will help to prevent discomfort and soreness. Try nursing on your side, with your baby in a football hold with her feet toward your back or with your baby lying across your lap. Get as much of the areola or dark area around the nipple into your baby’s mouth as you can without choking her. If your baby only gets the nipple itself without getting part of the areola, your nipple will get too sore, you may both get frustrated, and your baby will not get a full feeding.

Try to empty one breast before offering the second one. The final milk from the breast is richer than the first milk. The final milk is like “dessert” for your baby and will make her more satisfied. If your baby still seems hungry after the first breast is empty, offer the second. Then start with the second breast at the next feeding. Attaching a small ribbon or safety pin to your bra on the side you nursed from last will help remind you which breast to nurse from next time. Nursing equally from both sides will help boost your milk supply and help prevent one breast from producing more milk than the other.

If your breasts are very full, express a little milk for about 20 to 30 seconds to let the breast soften. If you are pumping bottles, this may be a great way to start a fresh bottle. Placing a warm cloth on the breast beforehand may make this easier. If the milk comes out too fast for your baby to nurse well, allow the milk to flow out into a clean towel (or fresh bottle) until the pressure goes down. Then try to nurse again.

Working While Breast-feeding

Of course, if you need to return to work, you may need to add bottles to your baby’s feeding routine. If you do not add these bottles until your baby has been nursing for at least a month as manufactured nipples may confuse your baby as he learns to properly latch onto your breast. Then add one bottle at the least favorite feeding. Slowly add more bottles every 2-3 days until you hit the number you will need when you are away. You may still be able to breast-feed when at home. You can either use formula or pumped breast milk in the bottle.

Taking Care of You

It’s important to take care of yourself while you are breast-feeding your baby. Drink plenty of water. Your body is working hard to produce a good milk supply for your baby. Lend a hand by making sure you stay hydrated. You may find that you are very thirsty during the first few months as your milk supply gets regulated to your baby’s needs. Water, juice and milk are excellent thirst quenchers for breast-feeding moms.

Be sure to get enough sleep. Take at least one nap a day when your baby sleeps. You will notice your milk supply goes up after you sleep. If family or friends want to help you, have them help with the household chores or care of any older children. You do not need their help to feed the baby.

Try to keep stress levels under control during this time. Pay close attention to your own health and well-being so you can take care of your new baby. Some women have a doula or support person that literally mothers the mother. She will help cook, clean, and care for mom, baby, and the rest of the family helping them all get off to a good start.

The Bottom Line

Do not get discouraged if at first breast-feeding is a challenge. All worthwhile skills take practice. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Every successful breast-feeding mother gets support from someone. And remember, breast-feeding is the best way to help your baby be healthy.

Connie Crawley and Gail M. Hanula, Foods & Nutrition, UGA
Feeding Time is Bonding Time! Tips for Successful Bottle-Feeding

Choosing a Formula

Other than breast milk, an iron-fortified formula is the only food your baby should need during the first four to six months of life. Three types of infant formula are available, and they are all equally nutritious:

- **Ready-to-feed**: Most expensive, no preparation time required.
- **Concentrated liquid**: Mid-priced, some preparation required.
- **Powdered**: Least expensive, most preparation time required, and good for travel. Powdered formula can be pre-measured and put in bottles, then water added when your baby is hungry.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that only commercially available infant formulas be used. Recipes for making infant formulas at home are not regulated and may result in serious nutritional deficiencies. For more information on infant formula, visit www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety.

Preparation and Storage

No matter which type of formula you choose, always use it before the “Use by” date. Be sure to follow the directions on the formula label exactly.

The FDA recommends that water used in the preparation of infant formula be boiled for one minute. Boiling reduces the risk of bacteria, viruses or parasites that could make baby sick. Check with your pediatrician to determine if he or she feels this is necessary in your situation.

Do not prepare more formula than you will need. Prepare several small bottles rather than one or two large bottles. Store all bottles of formula and breast milk in the refrigerator at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or colder until they are needed. Bottles of formula can be stored in the refrigerator for up to two days. Bottles of breast milk should be refrigerated and used within 24 hours or frozen for up to 3 months at 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Open cans of liquid formula should be kept in the refrigerator, covered, and used within 48 hours.

When traveling with baby, carry formula or breast milk in an insulated cooler with ice or frozen gel packs to keep it safe until needed. This includes trips to your child care provider. Label bottles with your baby’s name and the date the formula or breast milk was prepared by your child care provider. Be sure not to let dirty diapers come in contact with bottles or food in diaper bags.

Warming Bottles

You don’t have to warm infant formula. If you want to warm a bottle, hold it under hot running tap water or set the bottle in a container of hot, but not boiling, water. Never heat formula or breast milk on the stove or in a microwave oven. Heating in a microwave can result in hot spots in the liquid which can burn your baby’s mouth and throat. Then, check the temperature on your skin before offering it to your baby. It should be only lukewarm.

Feeding Your Baby

It’s important to hold your baby close to you in your arms while feeding, alternating arms to stimulate your baby’s eye development. Even though you might have a million things to do, avoid the temptation to prop a bottle. By holding your baby during feeding, you will decrease the likelihood of ear infections, baby bottle tooth decay, and choking on the formula. Hold your baby’s head a little higher than the rest of his body while feeding him. This will keep the formula from backing up or pooling in his inner ear, which could cause an ear infection.

When you begin feeding, touch the nipple next to the baby’s mouth. The baby will turn and grasp the nipple. Hold the bottle so that it sticks straight out. Be sure there is formula in the nipple. Air bubbles should appear in the formula as your baby drinks. If the bubbles stop, check for a clogged nipple.

Babies generally need to be fed every 2 to 3 hours in the first few months of life. Feed until your baby gives you signs she is full, such as sealing her lips, spitting out the nipple, and turning her head. Most feedings take 20 minutes or less. Your baby may not finish all of the formula in the bottle at every feeding. Do not try to force your baby to finish the entire bottle. Your baby will let you know when she is finished eating. Also, do not save any formula left in the bottle after a feeding. It should be thrown away.

Spitting up small amounts of formula several times a day is normal, especially in the first seven months of life. If baby spits up often, tips given by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children’s Digestive Health and Nutrition Foundation might be helpful. These include decreasing the size of each feeding (making up for it by feeding more often), burping baby several times during the feeding (not just after feeding), avoiding tight diapers and wastebands, and keeping baby upright for at least 30 minutes after feeding.

To keep baby safe, remember these steps:

- **Clean**: Wash your hands and your baby’s hands before handling bottles and food. Keep kitchens and utensils clean.
- **Separate**: Keep raw meats and their juices away from baby’s bottles, foods, toys and pacifiers. Also, keep dirty diapers out of diaper bags that contain baby’s food.
- **Chill**: Keep bottles of formula and breast milk cold until needed.
- **Discard**: Once the bottle has been in baby’s mouth, any formula or breast milk left in the bottle after feeding should be discarded. Also, discard formula or breast milk if it has been at room temperature for more than one hour.

Disclaimer: This information is not intended to substitute or replace the professional medical advice you receive from your child’s physician. The content provided is for informational purposes only, and was not designed to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your child’s physician with any questions or concerns you may have regarding a medical condition.

Safety first!

Washing your hands is the first step in avoiding food-borne illnesses and keeping baby safe. Before handling formula or breast milk, wash your hands and forearms for at least 20 seconds under warm, running water, rubbing hands together and paying special attention to fingernails.

Wash baby bottles and nipples well using a clean bottle brush with dishwashing liquid and hot water or wash them in a dishwasher. It’s not necessary to sterilize these unless your pediatrician recommends it for your baby.

To keep baby healthy and happy, the less stressful the first few months of life with baby will be.

Chill – Keep raw meats and their juices away from baby’s bottles, foods, toys and pacifiers. Also, keep dirty diapers out of diaper bags that contain baby’s food.
PARENTING TOGETHER: A Team Approach to Caring For Baby

How couples manage their parenting responsibilities now will affect the quality of the marriage later.

Share Your Thoughts Discuss in detail with your partner the realities and needs of your own family. Couples rarely talk about the specifics of how they plan to raise and discipline their children, and often fall back on the way they were parented. Share your preferences and work out an arrangement that will meet everyone’s needs. Some important questions to address may include: How will parenting responsibilities be shared? Will you need outside child care? Who does what around the house, and when?

Find Common Ground Point out the things you both agree on, and discuss ways to build from there. Where differences exist, zero in on the big picture and what you both want for your child; then negotiate ways to achieve that goal. Often, your disagreements may be diffused by understanding the root of your concern and talking about your basic ideals.

Be Open to Change The decisions you make now don’t have to last forever. As you and your partner negotiate work and family responsibilities, make sure to give yourself options. Plans usually need to change as time goes by, your baby grows, or you have additional children. Agree on a time frame when you will check in with each other to see how your arrangement is working out and make any necessary changes.

Give Support Avoid expressing disapproval or dislike of each other’s parenting strategies, interfering with each other’s parenting efforts, and competing for the infant’s attention. Instead of focusing on what you feel your partner is doing wrong, try to see things through his or her eyes and move past what you perceive to be your partner’s parenting shortcomings. Above all, communicate with your partner. Sharing your fears, concerns, and feelings as a parent can help diffuse parenting conflict and help you maintain emotional intimacy and work as a team.

Compliment Each Other Focusing on the negatives and criticizing what your partner does that you don’t agree with can lead to hurt feelings, defensiveness, and communication breakdown. Instead, focus on the positives and provide constructive praise, such as “the baby really seemed to enjoy the way you played with her on the floor” or “I really like it when we take turns getting the baby ready for bed.” The other parent will feel more appreciated, good about his or her parenting, and more willing to listen to your ideas.

Build on Strengths You will both bring strengths and weaknesses into your new parenting roles. Something you may find difficult your partner may be able to do with ease and vice versa. Build on each other’s strengths and weaknesses and work as a team as often as possible. You are both in this together as the new parents of your baby.

Schedule Bonding Time In attending to all the parenting, work, and household responsibilities, couple time is often ignored, or you are just too tired to think about it. Make a conscious effort to set aside at least a few minutes a day to check in with each other. Turn to friends and family for child care support so you can spend alone time together.

The Bottom Line The stress resulting from balancing work and family roles, coupled with fatigue and the seemingly endless demands of a baby, make it easy to understand how conflict in the couple relationship could increase. Although becoming a parent can challenge you and your relationship, view this transition as an opportunity to enrich your marriage — take charge of these changes and create opportunities for lasting love and connection!

Ted G. Futris
Child & Family Development, UGA

What if we’re not together? Parenting together for parents who are apart can be challenging. However, it’s important for children that their parents cooperate. Here are some more ways to manage this relationship:

- Establish clear rules. Clarify with each other what’s expected in your relationship and what feels comfortable when interacting.
- Don’t try to change the other parent. Instead, focus on your behavior and the way you react to each other. Parents who try to control the other parent’s thoughts, feelings, or behaviors end up frustrated, dissatisfied, and bitter when things don’t go their way.
- Be respectful. Respect each other’s privacy, and don’t expect to get the details of his/her life. Instead, focus discussions around your child unless the other parent agrees to something different.
- Keep agreements and appointments. Be on time dropping off and/or picking up your child. If you promise to do something, do it. If you have difficulties honoring your commitments, let it be known and why.
- Be flexible. Work with each other on visitation schedules, holidays, and vacations. Remember that your child’s needs change as he or she gets older.
- Be polite. Refrain from name-calling or bad language when referring to the other parent, particularly in front of your child. Ask yourself if what you are doing is in the best interest of your child.

Respect your child’s need to love and develop positive relationships with both parents. By promoting good will in your relationship, you are investing in your child’s happiness and success in life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION... 1-800-ASK-UGA1 (275-8421)
Contact your local Family and Consumer Sciences County Extension Agent for more helpful resources on supporting healthy couple, marital, and coparental relationships.
For many families, bringing baby home for the first time can be an exciting moment. Quite a bit of planning goes into this memorable ride home. This may include choosing the outfit your baby will wear, installing a car seat securely for baby’s safety, and sending notices to friends and family who will be waiting to see this new little bundle of joy. But have you thought about how to prepare family members for the arrival of this new person into the family home? Here are some things to think about as you make the adjustment.

Everything Changes Once baby comes home, you will likely find that your normal routine is disrupted. In meeting your baby’s needs and your personal needs, you may find it harder to give equal time to every family member. This may leave other people in the family feeling left out or no longer as important. They may even begin to show feelings of jealousy toward the baby. With open communication and a little teamwork, you can overcome these challenges and bond together as a new family.

Sibling Rivalry When bringing a new baby home, you may find that an older sibling will begin to display feelings of jealousy toward the new baby. The older sibling may not understand that babies require a lot of time and energy. Set aside time alone each day to spend with her, maybe during baby’s nap time or during a time when a friend or family member is watching the baby. Use this special time to remind the older sibling that she is important too. Try to involve her in the new baby’s care by allowing her to choose outfits for baby to wear, bring you diapers and wipes as needed, and choose accessories from the store for the new baby. Talk about how important it is for everyone to help in taking care of the new baby, and give the older sibling fun things to do for baby. This will help her develop a sense of responsibility for the new baby and help decrease any underlying feelings of jealousy.

Bring Sexy Back Carving out time to spend with your partner may be difficult in the first few weeks and months. However, just as you spend quality time with your infant, remember that your partner needs quality time with you too. Ask friends and family to assist you in watching the baby so you and your partner can reconnect in ways that are special to the both of you. Try not to feel guilty about leaving your baby. You have left her in the care of someone you trust, and spending quality time with your partner is just as important as being a good parent. If going out is not an option, use baby’s sleep time to spend time with one another. Also, find opportunities to be together as a new family to strengthen your bonds and create a united front as parents of this new baby.

To Grandmother’s House We Go Grandparents can be a very beneficial in the life of a new grand baby. Research shows us that grandparents are not only excellent and trustworthy babysitters, but they also may be able to provide economic and other types of support when needed. In many families, new parents and grandparents both feel enormous pleasure and pride with the new baby and enjoy the new bonds they develop around caring for and playing with the baby. Occasionally, new parents and grandparents may have some conflicting ideas about handling situations such as feeding, crying, sleep times, or other everyday routines. When differences arise on these kinds of issues, do not let this drive a wedge between you and your parents. Instead use this as an opportunity to have frank and respectful communication about these differences and about your preferences as the baby’s parents.

The important thing to remember is that both parents and grandparents want what is best for the new baby. As you transition to the role of parents, your parents may have to adjust to seeing you in your new adult role as well. And, they are learning to adjust to their new role of being grandparents. But don’t miss out on the opportunity to listen and learn from your parents as they may provide useful information and wisdom from their life experience. They can be an important source of help and moral support for you as your child grows.

Aunts, Uncles, and Everyone Else Other family members may also play a helpful role in the life of your baby, either through sharing resources (money, baby items, clothes or accessories) or providing childcare when needed. Your family may also provide emotional support or instruction in child-rearing practices. Talk about how you want to raise your child. Be open to giving advice as well as taking it. However, while you may share information on how to parent your child, try not to get into a competition with the other parents in your family. Everyone parents their children differently. As long as the child’s needs are being met in healthy ways, it is okay if your parenting methods differ. Establish clear limits and boundaries with your family to avoid feeling smothered or controlled. For many parents, family (and friends) can provide many benefits for the growing family.

The Bottom Line Bringing baby home may cause chaos and disruption in your normal family routines, leaving existing family members feeling left out or less important. Open communication, understanding and a lot of love will go a long way in making sure everyone bonds together and enjoys spending time with the newest member of your family.

H. Marissa Stone and Ted G. Futris Child & Family Development, UGA
Babies Need Their Daddy  When fathers are consistently and positively involved in their child’s life, their child does better emotionally, physically, and cognitively. Studies show that babies with involved dads feel more secure when their needs are met by both parents. Later in life, these children have more confidence, a stronger sense of who they are, and tend to do better in school, and have a host of other positive characteristics. Dads may be involved in their child’s life in somewhat different ways than moms, but the important thing is that dads get (and stay) involved.

What to Do  It’s normal for fathers (and mothers) to feel unsure of how to take care of their new babies. If you have never been around babies before, they can seem fragile and scary. Give yourself time to learn how to care for your infant. Watch what others do, ask questions, ask for suggestions, and discover what works best for you. This is a very good time to call on friends and family for support, assistance, or simply a listening ear. Seek the support and guidance of other new or experienced dads. Good fathering, like good mothering, takes time and practice. Here are a few quick tips to get you started:

- **Listen to your baby.** Your baby’s cries and coos are how she says I’m hungry, hurt, sleepy, lonely, soiled, etc. By spending time with and caring for your baby, you will learn what your baby needs and how she communicates it. Respond to her needs quickly. And don’t worry, you can’t spoil baby by responding too fast.

- **Gently hold your baby close.** Babies love to be held, and feel most comfortable when held close. If you are not sure how to hold baby, don’t be afraid to ask someone to show you how. During this first month, your baby can only see things about 8-12 inches away. Babies love to look at human faces, so remember to hold your baby close enough to see you. Pick up your baby as much as possible, remembering to support baby’s head to protect his growing brain. Holding your baby often will help you connect with your baby and help him learn to feel safe with you.

- **Stay calm and relaxed around your baby.** Like everything else, with time you will discover what holding and comforting techniques work best for your baby. Remember, never shake a baby. Shaking a baby can cause brain damage, injuries, and even death.

- **Nurture your baby.** If your partner has chosen to breast-feed, you may feel a bit left out during feeding times. Once the mother and baby are comfortable breast-feeding, your partner may start pumping milk. This may make it possible for you to share in the feeding of your baby. However, even if you do not feed your baby, there are many other nurturing activities you can engage in. Try to take time each day to rock and hold your baby. Learn to comfort your baby when she is upset, change her diaper when it is soiled, and regularly give her a bath.

- **Talk softly to your baby.** When holding, changing, or feeding your baby, speak or sing in a calm voice using a higher pitch than you normally use. This is called speaking in Motherese. Babies prefer this higher pitched sound, and it helps them learn early communication skills. Also, talking to your baby regularly will help him recognize and feel comfortable with you. He will be more receptive to what you are doing. This is a great time for him to start hearing and learning new words.

- **Let your baby know what’s happening.** When interacting with your baby, tell her what you are doing (“Let’s put your arm through the sleeve.”) or where you are going (“Up you go on the changing table.”) or what is happening next (“Time for bath. Let’s get the water ready.”). Talking to your baby when you are feeding, changing, bathing, or simply lying down on the floor with her helps her understand, feel safe with, and predict what is happening in her daily routine.

- **Don’t worry too much about discipline at this point.** All parents want their children to grow up to be respectful and well behaved. Many parents are concerned that their baby will become spoiled if the parents respond to every cry at this age. Relax! The most important thing for your baby to learn at this age is that he can trust his caregivers to be there when he is cold, hungry, wet, or just bored. The self-discipline you teach your child later will be much more effective if you focus now on building a consistent, caring relationship.

Supporting Your Partner  Whether you are married or not, being there for your baby’s mother is another important way of being an involved dad. As she deals with this emotionally and physically demanding transition, she will need your support and understanding. After the birth, be prepared to feel left out at times as she focuses most of her energy and attention on herself and your new baby. Her behaviors are not a rejection of you. To help her during this time, pick up more of the house work or anything else you can think of that will allow your partner to focus on herself and your baby. If you have other children, use this time to enhance your connection with them. Attending to their needs will not only help your partner, but also help diffuse sibling rivalry. Remember, the better your partner’s needs are met, the better your baby’s needs will be met.

Balancing Work and Family Time  For many fathers, the birth of a new child gives new meaning and importance to paid work. The growing needs of a child create added costs and financial concerns for all parents. While fulfilling your financial commitment to your child, be careful that you do not fall in the trap of retreating into your work. If possible, take paternity leave sometime during your baby’s first year. Most new fathers have access to some form of leave, but only a small percentage actually take advantage of it. If paternity leave is not an option, be sure to carve out enough time each day to spend with your baby. Mom will appreciate the support, and baby will benefit from the attention.

The Bottom Line  Being a father may be the most emotionally rewarding experience in your life. Take time to enjoy these feelings, and take an active and positive role in the care of your baby. Have fun discovering creative ways to interact and connect with your baby. The time you spend with your baby now will make you a more effective parent in the future.

Ted G. Fairis and H. Marissa Stone
Child & Family Development, UGA

Hints on making a strong connection with your baby

Babies Need Their Daddy  When fathers are consistently and positively involved in their child’s life, their child does better emotionally, physically, and cognitively. Studies show that babies with involved dads feel more secure when their needs are met by both parents. Later in life, these children have more confidence, a stronger sense of who they are, and tend to do better in school, and have a host of other positive characteristics. Dads may be involved in their child’s life in somewhat different ways than moms, but the important thing is that dads get (and stay) involved.

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Ted G. Fairis and H. Marissa Stone
Child & Family Development, UGA

www.gafamilies.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

1-800-ASK-UGA1 (275-8421)

Contact your local Family and Consumer Sciences County Extension Agent for more helpful resources on parenting your growing child.
In-Home vs. Out-of-Home Child Care

One important choice as a parent is whether you want your child to be cared for in your home or in an out-of-home environment. There are advantages and disadvantages to both choices. Choosing in-home care may make the adjustment to child care easier because your child will be in a familiar environment. Having someone come to your home to provide care is convenient, and you may feel more comfortable knowing your child is being cared for by someone whose sole focus is on your child. Professional in-home caregivers do tend to be more expensive and are not regulated by the state of Georgia. Be cautious in screening potential in-home caregivers.

Out-of-home care includes many different types of care, from taking your child to a friend or relative’s home to enrolling him in a large child care center. Most out-of-home programs must meet strict state licensing regulations. Your child will also get the chance to interact with other children regularly while in most out-of-home settings. Out-of-home programs do tend to vary in quality, so be sure you’re choosing a high-quality program. Good out-of-home care may have a waiting list, and you may have to pay more for higher quality programs than for low quality programs. Remember that your child’s well-being and your peace of mind are worth the extra cost.

Indications of High Quality Child Care

Quality child care can look different in different types of programs. But researchers have found that certain features of a child care program directly affect the care that children receive. These are some of the most well-documented quality indicators for child care programs:

- **Low adult-to-child ratios.** Children benefit when each adult is caring for a smaller group of children. When the adult-to-child ratio is low, caregivers are better able to be stimulating, responsive, warm, and supportive.

- **Small group sizes.** Children are more likely to receive responsive care in smaller groups. If your child is an infant, ask whether the program assigns your child to a primary caregiver who gets to know him well and helps him build a secure relationship.

- **Well-educated caregivers.** Adults with more education and training tend to be more sensitive and responsive to your child’s needs and to provide a richer learning environment. Ask what credential the caregivers have and whether they receive ongoing training.

- **A nurturing environment.** Look for a program that makes you and your child feel welcome and secure. Caregivers should spend time establishing a caring relationship with your child by talking to him one-on-one, spending time playing on the floor with him, and responding when he cries, coos, or babbles. The program should welcome you to visit any time, provide you with written policies and procedures, ask you for specific information about your child, share information about your child’s day, and involve you as a partner in your child’s learning.

The Bottom Line
When choosing a child care program, the most important consideration is finding a program that provides warm, nurturing care that supports and stimulates your child’s development. Choose the highest-quality program that fits your budget and schedule, and remember that high-quality child care is worth the extra cost.

Diane Bales
Child & Family Development, UGA
Putting Baby on a Budget

Now that the baby is here, you will need to make some changes in the family spending plan. Learning more about what you did with your money before the baby came along can often help you to identify potential areas of savings in the budget to offset at least part of the cost of the new baby. This is especially important, because when a new baby joins the household, it’s easy to overspend. Here are some ways to avoid overspending and ensure your pocketbook is not too overwhelmed by your new bouncing bundle of joy.

Assessing Your Spending The arrival of a new baby, especially the first baby, leads parents, grandparents, and other relatives to want to buy everything possible to decorate, furnish, and fully accessorize both baby and nursery. Designer clothing, expensive tennis shoes, and an endless variety of age-appropriate toys provide additional temptations. Purchases for the baby can eat up a sizeable chunk of the family budget. Tracking your spending and planning for the additional expenses now can help you avoid financial problems later.

Take a hard look at where your money goes. This task, however daunting and unpleasant it appears, is almost always worth the effort. Most families can increase their spending power by as much as 20 percent by paying more attention to how they spend. Once you know where your money goes, you can see more clearly what you need to do differently to accommodate baby expenses and get more for your hard-earned money.

Here’s a test. Make a list of your expenses, including your best guess of the amount you spend for each expense in a typical month. When you have thought about how much you spend and what it was for. As you are identifying where this money has been going, you can decide whether all or part of the money you have coming in each month. How do these numbers compare? How much money does it look like you should have left over each month? How does that money you have coming in each month. How do these numbers compare? How much money does it look like you should have left over each month? How does that

Reducing Your Spending Now that you know where your money goes, you can examine your spending habits. As you are looking at how your family spends money, think about whether or not it’s okay to spend that much for each expense. Think about what’s really important. Does most of your money go for things that matter to you? Having a new member of the family may change your perceptions about what is and is not important. You may want to spend more for recreational activities as a family, for education, or for your retirement and other future goals.

Take a look at your largest expenses. Are there things you can do differently to reduce them? The key is to identify expenses you feel are too high and then find ways to reduce them to a more acceptable level. Areas where you spend more than you think are easy targets for change. If you feel you spend too much for any particular expense, change your spending so that it’s more in line with what’s important to you and develop a plan to reduce these expenses.

Your first reaction might well be to give something up entirely. While that kind of sacrifice can help you to get results, it’s more in line with what’s important to you and develop a plan to reduce these expenses.

The Bottom Line A new baby will mean big changes in how you spend your money. Watching how much you spend and plugging leaks in the family budget can free up additional dollars to help with baby expenses.

Michael Rupured and Joan Koonce Housing & Consumer Economics, UGA

What does your family budget look like?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount Spent/ Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage/ Rent</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furnish/Maintenance</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Supplies</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Phone</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water/Garbage/Sewer</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Payment</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag/Registration</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance/Repairs</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dining Out</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie/Play/Concerts</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobbies</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Baby Makes Three</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula/Baby Food</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diapers/Wipes</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Bills/Medications</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Accessories</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Education Fund</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Monthly Expenses</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Household Income</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's Left Over Each Month</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use this as a starting point for determining your monthly expenses. Where do you overspend? What can you cut? Where do you need to invest more of your money? records you may have on hand to verify spending for many of your expenses. If after reviewing your records you still have a gap between how much you think you spend and how much you actually spend, more work is needed. Track down this missing cash by carrying a small pad with you to record your daily spending habits. Write down every cent you spend and what it was for. After a month, compare this record of your actual spending to your estimated spending. The results of this hard work should be the elimination of any missing cash.

The Bottom Line

And Baby Makes Three Once you know where your money went before the baby came along, you can start to think about additional expenses that will arise now that baby is here. Food, diapers, clothing, medical expenses, and child care are just a few areas for which you need to plan. It may be possible to offset the cost of some of these new expenses with savings from changes in your spending habits. You may also need to re-evaluate wants, needs and priorities to make additional cuts in the family spending plan to accommodate baby expenses.

Parents have lots of options for reducing the cost of baby expenses. Shop around for big-ticket items you need for the baby. Be sure to check garage sales, second-hand stores, and consignment stores, especially those that focus on baby items. Churches and other community organizations often have consignment sales as fundraisers. Babies grow so fast that previously owned clothing and other items are often as good as new. Remember, the less you spend on items that your child will quickly outgrow, the more you can save and invest for your child’s future.
While planning for the arrival of your bundle of joy, you probably purchased or received gifts such as baby clothes, furniture, formula, and other necessities. All of these items are important in raising a child. But have you thought about your child’s needs as he or she grows older, such as how college costs will be covered? Because reaching college age seems so far away, most people fail to think about it until it’s too late. However, planning for your child’s education is just as important as planning for their arrival.

Don’t Bank on Scholarships Some children are fortunate enough to receive academic, athletic or other types of scholarships, fellowships and/or grants. Having college costs paid for through these means would be great, but it is not guaranteed. Many parents who depend on these are disappointed when things don’t turn out as planned and may be forced to go into debt or dip into their retirement savings to pay for their child’s education. You should plan ahead for your child’s education, and if your child does receive other financial support then the amount saved can be used for your child’s or family’s other expenses. If your savings are in qualified education accounts, it’s important to remember that some of these accounts do impose penalties if funds are not used to cover your child’s educational expenses.

Every Dollar Adds Up If you plan ahead and start when your child is born, paying for your child’s education is not as hard as you think. As shown in the table, if parents invest as little as $50 per month in an account earning 6 percent from the time the child is born until he or she is 18 years old, they will have $19,307 when the child goes to college. Of course, if parents save more and earn higher interest rates, they will have even more by the time their child turns 18. This is the power of consistently investing a set amount over a period of time, also called compound interest. Also, when you invest money and leave what you earn in interest in the account, you earn interest on what you invest each month plus the previous interest earned. This is the power of compound interest, or earning interest on interest. The amount of money you should set aside is based on how many children you have and the inflation-adjusted cost of the college they wish to attend. Like everything else, the cost of college increases over time, and so this needs to be considered.

Programs to Help You Save To encourage parents to save for their child’s college education, the federal and state governments have established tax-advantaged savings accounts or plans specifically designed to save for their child’s college education. Some of these include the Coverdell Education Savings Account, Section 529 Savings Plans and Prepaid Tuition Plans. Other tax-advantaged methods used to save for children’s education include putting money into U. S. Savings Bonds and custodial accounts for the child. The account and/or plans you use will depend on your unique family circumstances and tax situation. One size does not fit all.

Life Insurance Although death is not a pleasant subject, parents should also think about the possibility of their death after the birth of a child. Most parents with a young child have not had the time to accumulate the necessary financial resources to care for their child if they die unexpectedly. However, the child has to be provided for financially, and the cost of college is one of the child’s financial needs. One way of providing for your child is to purchase life insurance. The primary purpose of life insurance is to provide the financial resources needed by your dependents in the event of your premature death (dying while someone is financially dependent upon you). There are many different types of life insurance, so parents need to choose a life insurance plan that best suits their needs. As with the tax-advantaged educational accounts and/or plans, one size does not fit all.

The Bottom Line If you have not started planning for your child’s education, don’t be discouraged. It is never too late. Start now. Regularly save as much as you can, and let the power of compound interest work for you.

Joan Koons and Michael Bupared Housing & Consumer Economics, UGA
A Healthy Home for Baby

Whether you are bringing a new baby home or have older children, it is important to have a healthy home.

A healthy home is one that provides a safe environment with clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and minimal environmental contamination. Air within homes and other buildings can be more polluted than the outdoor air. Because most people spend the majority of their time indoors, having a healthy home is important for both parents and children, but especially for children. Children are more susceptible to the effects of pollutants than adults. In proportion to their size, children breathe, drink, and eat more than adults. Children, and especially babies, also do things that may expose them to contaminants such as lead. For example, children put everything in their mouths. Because it’s not known for sure what concentrations or periods of exposure are necessary to produce specific health problems, health effects from contaminants may be experienced soon after exposure or possibly even years later.

Whether you are bringing a new baby home or have older children, it is important to have a healthy home. Here are the most common pollutants and tips on preventing and treating them.

Mold All homes have some mold. Excessive levels of mold are unacceptable. To prevent and eliminate indoor mold growth, you must control indoor moisture.

- Repair leaking pipes.
- Use exhaust fans while cooking and bathing; make certain that exhaust fans are vented to the outdoors.
- Make sure that crawl spaces and attics are properly vented.
- Place a six mil plastic vapor retarder in your home’s crawl space to prevent ground moisture from migrating to your home.
- Make sure that outdoor water drains away from your home.
- Keep the humidity level in your home below 60 percent; check the amount of moisture in the air using a hygrometer.

Lead Poisoning Lead poisoning due to ingestion of lead-based paint, chips, and dust is the number one environmental health problem for children. Lead is a heavy metal that when absorbed in a child’s body can cause neurological damage. Lead interferes with the healthy development of neurons, which, among other reasons, can affect a child’s ability to learn and perform well at school. Lead is most often found in homes built before 1978. Lead is also found in some toys, jewelry, pottery, folk remedies, and water pipes. It is important to prevent lead dust from decaying paint or painted surfaces to become airborne and enter a child’s blood stream. To learn more about lead and specific ways to prevent lead poisoning, contact your local Family and Consumer Sciences County Extension Agent.

Chemical Toxic Exposure A variety of chemicals are used in homes. Some household chemicals are highly toxic, and some have no known health effect. Chemicals include but are not limited to cleaners, detergents, and pesticides. Follow these tips to reduce exposure to chemicals and prevent poisonings.

- Before you purchase a product, read the label. Is the product right for your project? For example, don’t use chemicals meant for outdoor use inside of your home.
- Buy only the products you need.
- Before using any product, read, understand, and follow all directions on the label.
- Once you have finished with a chemical product, put it away immediately in an area where children can’t get to it.
- Don’t leave chemical products on a counter.
- Discard partially full containers of old or unneeded chemicals safely.
- Keep children away from all harmful chemicals.
- Most importantly, keep the number for Poison Control handy: (800) 222-1222. Don’t be afraid to use it.

Asthma and Allergy Triggers Pets, tobacco smoke, cockroaches, and mold can affect your home’s air and aggravate allergies and asthma. To reduce and prevent asthma and allergy triggers in your home:

- Keep your home clean. Regular cleaning can reduce the amount of dust mites, pollen, animal dander, pests, and other allergy-causing agents in your home. Reduce the amount of things that collect dust, such as carpets, upholstered furniture, and knick-knacks. In the bedroom, wash sheets and other bedding at least once a week with hot water and dry in the dryer to control dust mites. Wash soft toys regularly. Remove those that cannot be washed from the bed area. Cover mattresses and pillows with dust-proof (allergen-impermeable) zippered covers.
- Control pests. Starve pests out of your home by keeping trash covered, storing food in sealed containers, keeping dishes clean, and fixing any water leaks. Also, do not let bags, boxes, stacks, or piles of stuff become cozy homes for pests. To prevent future invasions, repair your home by sealing pest entry points. To control roaches, place baits and traps in areas that children can’t reach.
- Keep mold levels down. As discussed earlier, control moisture in your home. If you use a humidifier, fill it with fresh water and clean it daily.

Radon Radon is an odorless, tasteless radioactive gas. Radon is produced by uranium found in soil and rock all over the United States. Once radon enters a home, it moves freely throughout the indoor air and can be breathed into your lungs, causing a higher risk of lung cancer. To prevent radon exposure, test your home for radon. Performing a radon test on your own is easy, inexpensive, and can be done privately. Every home is unique due to its local soil, construction details, maintenance, and degree of depressurization. Therefore, test results from nearby homes cannot be relied upon to predict the radon level in another home. Likewise, previous test results may not reflect current and future radon levels for a home that has been remodeled, weatherized, or had changes made to its heating, air conditioning, or other ventilation systems such as exhaust fans. If your radon test kit comes back with a reading of four picoCuries per liter or higher, take immediate action to reduce radon levels. Seal the cracks in your home with caulk, then retest. If radon levels are still elevated, you can have a professional install a ventilation system that sucks air from beneath the home and vents it to the outside where it safely dilutes. For more information about radon, visit www.ugaradon.com.

The Bottom Line Analyze your lifestyle. Make certain that you are doing things that keep your home healthy and safe for your family. Most importantly, take a proactive approach to keep contaminants out of your home.

Pamela R. Turner, Gina G. Peek and Jorge H. Atile
Housing & Consumer Economics, UGA
The best child safety seat is the one that fits your baby, fits your vehicle, and will be used correctly every trip.

### Used or New?

From diapers to doctor’s visits and everything in between, babies can be expensive. It can be tempting to want to save money with a used child safety seat. Although not everything for your baby has to be new, remember that this is safety equipment. Stay away from used seats at online auction sites, yard sales, and thrift stores. You don’t know who owned the seat or how they treated it. It’s better to buy new so you can be sure of its condition and that it meets current safety standards.

### Selecting a Seat

Every time your baby rides in a car, make sure she’s in a child safety seat appropriate for her age and size. Check the labels. Most seats fit babies 5 pounds and up, but some seats start at birth or 4 pounds. The best child safety seat is the one that fits your baby, fits your vehicle, and will be used correctly every trip.

There are three main types of safety seats for infants and young children. Many people find rear-facing-only seats convenient because of their light weight and carry handles. A convertible seat is another option that may be used rear-facing for younger children and converted to forward-facing for older children. Convertible seats fit most children up to 50 pounds. A 5-in-1 seat may be used as an infant seat, then as a convertible seat, and later changed to a booster seat when your child reaches the maximum harness weight recommended by the manufacturer. A special car bed is an option if your infant has a medical need to lie flat when riding. Your doctor will tell you if this is the case.

### Placing a Seat in Your Vehicle

The safest place for your child is in the back seat. However, if your vehicle doesn’t have a back seat, you can place your child safety seat in the front as long as you can turn off the passenger-side airbag. NEVER place a rear-facing seat in front of an active airbag. If you’re not sure if your vehicle has a passenger air bag, check your vehicle owner’s manual or sun visor, or look for letters such as “SRS” embossed somewhere on the dashboard.

All infant child safety seats must be installed facing the rear of your vehicle. Even convertible seats must be installed facing the rear until your baby is old enough to reach the forward-facing label. The harness positions should be checked to ensure that the child is seated with the harness correctly positioned over the shoulders.

### Positioning Your Child

The straps that hold your baby in her seat are called the harness. Make sure the harness straps over her shoulders don’t come out of the back of the seat above her shoulders. If they do, check the instructions to find out how to lower the harness. Those straps should begin at or slightly below her shoulders to hold her safely in a rear-facing seat.

Also, the harness should be snug so you can’t pinch any extra webbing. Test it at the baby’s collarbone. Move the plastic retainer clip so it’s across the chest – about armpit level. This keeps the straps in the correct position so they won’t slide off the baby’s shoulders.

Don’t put anything under your baby or between his body and the harness. Even a heavy coat could keep the harness from doing its job in a crash. Instead, you can fill in extra space around the baby by placing rolled receiving blankets along both of his sides (as illustrated) and a rolled washcloth between his legs and the crotch strap. You can also put a blanket on top of the harness to keep him warm.

### Things You Should Know

All infants and toddlers should ride rear-facing in a safety seat until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their safety seat manufacturer. Rear-facing is safest because it helps protect your child from spinal cord injuries in a crash. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ride rear-facing as long as possible – until they reach the upper weight limits of the seat. Some states allow for rear-facing to 40 pounds. Be mindful of the seat’s height limits. Your child is usually too tall for the seat if the top of her head is within an inch of the top of the child safety seat.

Georgia law requires children under the age of 8 to ride in a child safety seat appropriate for their height and weight (with some exceptions) and used according to the manufacturer’s instructions. However, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children continue riding in child safety seats or boosters even longer. Most children don’t fit into seat belts until they’re about 4’9” tall, and between 8 and 12 years old. Make sure you and other adults wear seat belts to set a good example, and to keep you safe too. An unsecured passenger can cause injury to others in a crash.

### Bottom Line

After you unpack your new safety seat, do what many parents don’t: read the owner’s manual for the car seat and your vehicle. Eight out of 10 child safety seats are installed incorrectly. Make sure yours isn’t one of them!

Leigh Ekelbar, Melba King, Mary Ann Robinson and Don Bower UGA Traffic Injury Prevention Institute

### Road Trip: Safety First!

You’ve taken extra care for nine months to protect your baby. Now it’s time to protect him from one of the most dangerous times of his day—riding in a vehicle.

### Installing the Seat

LATCH – Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children – is a way to install child safety seats without using the seat belt. Most new vehicles have LATCH in at least two seating positions, but it’s not always in the middle of the back seat. Check your vehicle owner’s manual to locate any LATCH anchors in your vehicle.

If you don’t have LATCH, you can still install your baby’s seat safely with a seat belt. Just make sure the belt “locks” the child safety seat in place. Some seat belts lock automatically. On others, you pull the seat belt all the way out to lock it. Some seat belts need an extra piece of hardware to make them lock. Check your vehicle owner’s manual to find out how your seat belts work.

Whether you use LATCH or the seat belt, make sure your baby’s seat is tightly installed. Put your hands near the seat belt openings on the sides of the safety seat, and pull the seat side-to-side and front-to-back. The safety seat shouldn’t move more than an inch.

### Helpful Resources

For more information on child safety seats, go to the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site: www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm

You can also have your seat inspected by a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. Go to http://cert.safekids.org and click the “Find a Technician” link or call toll-free 866-SEATCHECK (866-732-6243) to locate a child safety seat inspection station and set up an installation appointment.

If you have questions, please contact us at the UGA Traffic Injury Prevention Institute: 1-800-342-9819 or www.ridesafegeorgia.org

www.gafamilies.org