



# Baby Steps

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## New baby, new expenses

With the arrival of a new baby, parents, grandparents, and other relatives want to buy everything to decorate, furnish, and fully accessorize both baby and nursery. Making some changes in the family budget is key to saving your hard-earned dollars for the additional expenses you will want and need for your new bundle of joy.

Financial problems can be prevented by tracking your current spending and saving for future expenses now. Once you know how your money is being spent, you can see more clearly where changes in spending habits are needed. You will also find ways to save and stretch your income.

According to financial specialists at the University of Georgia, the best way to begin making budget adjustments is to make a list of all your expenses and add up the total. Next, total up your monthly income. How do the two

numbers compare? Do you have enough money left over each month to allow for new baby expenses?

To assess your financial situation, consider recording your monthly expenses using the chart created by Michael Rupured, MS, AFC and Joan Koonce, PhD, AFC, Department of Housing and Consumer Economics, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia at <http://spock.fcs.uga.edu/ext/pubs/chfd/CHFD-E-86-9.pdf>.

The bottom line is that a new baby will mean big changes in how you spend your money. Take the time to identify where dollars can be saved for the future expenses of your new baby.

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## Learning and developing language

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Babies interact and communicate their needs to their parents and caregivers. But the way the parent or caregiver responds to and engages with the baby makes a big difference with regard to language development. Research conducted by Dr. Marianella Casola, an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development at Cornell University, has demonstrated that babies learn and develop language skills during the first two years of life. The use of novel words and events promotes learning and helps babies recognize words before they are able to verbalize them.

The early years are very important for language development. Here are some tips to help your baby learn and develop his or her language skills:

- Label what is already the focus of your child's attention rather than trying to redirect their attention. Always attach words to objects.
- Describe your actions by using words and speaking out loud: "Mommy is putting the milk in the refrigerator".
- Describe your child's actions by using words and speaking out loud: "You are putting the blue car next to the red car".

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## Learning and developing language

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- Explore books with images and use action words to describe the story to your baby.
- Read to your child. Besides promoting language development, it also creates a special time with you and your baby.
- The more you talk with your baby the more words he will learn. Research demonstrates that frequent communication with infants and toddlers is directly related to the amount of words babies learn.
- Act out songs such as “If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands”. Babies will learn to share in the movements as you sing and learn new words.
- Play word games such as “Pat-a-Cake”. Doing so will facilitate an infants’ ability to hear and learn language in a playful context.

Begin now to speak out loud to your baby. You will be helping your baby with language and learning development.

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## Have you heard about ear infections?



The most common reason parents take their child to a doctor is for an ear infection, known as otitis media (OM). There are three different types of ear infections; each with a different combination of symptoms.

**Acute otitis media (AOM)** is the most common type of ear infection. Parts of the middle ear are infected and swollen and fluid is trapped behind the eardrum causing fever and earaches.

**Otitis media with effusion (OME)** sometimes happens after an ear infection has run its course but fluid stays trapped behind the eardrum. A child with OME may have no symptoms at all, but a doctor will be able to see the fluid behind the eardrum with a special instrument.

**Chronic otitis media with effusion (COME)** happens when fluid remains in the middle ear for a long time or returns over and over again, even though there is no infection. COME makes it harder for children to fight new infections and can also affect their hearing.

**Signs of ear infection:** Unfortunately, most all ear infections happen to children before they have learned how to talk. If your child can’t yet communicate to tell you “my ear hurts,” here are some signs below:

- Tugging or pulling at the ear(s)
- Fussiness and crying
- Trouble sleeping
- Fever (especially in infants and younger children)
- Fluid draining from the ear
- Clumsiness or problems with balance
- Trouble hearing or responding to quiet sounds

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## Breastfeeding doesn't have to be stressful

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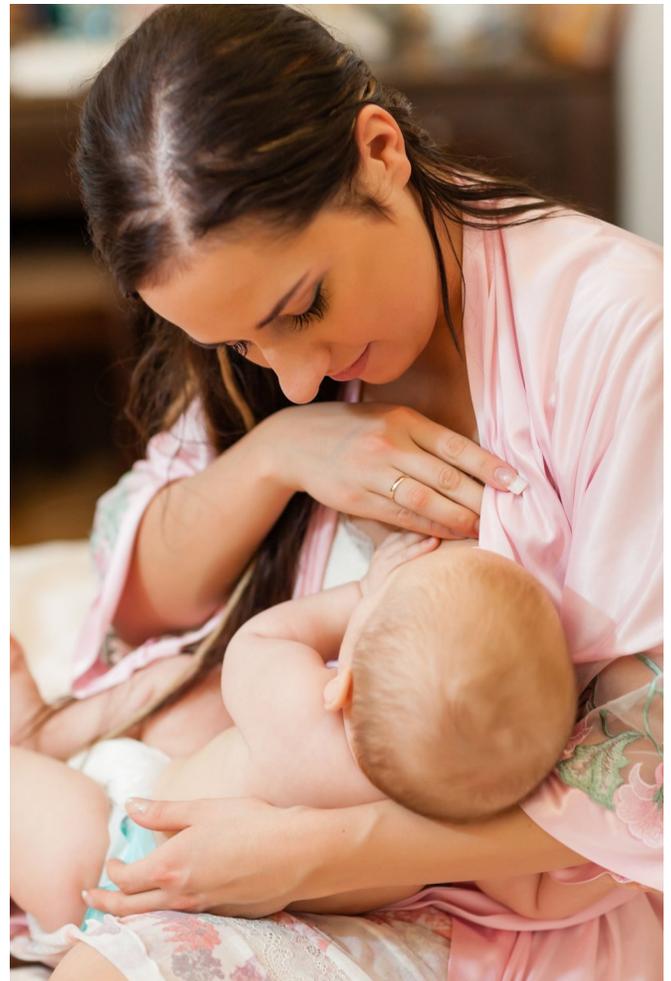
Having a new baby and getting into the breastfeeding routine can be stressful. However, studies have shown that breastfeeding is so healthy for moms and their infants that it is worth the effort. Breastfeeding is a normal process; it offers essential nutrients and a nutritionally balanced meal. Breastmilk is easy to digest and helps infants fight diseases.

Stress affects breastfeeding and can make you more likely to get sick or have trouble sleeping. Stress may cause stomach problems, headaches, and mental health conditions. However, breastfeeding can help mothers relax and handle stress better. Skin-to-skin contact with your baby has a soothing effect.

These steps could help ease stress while breastfeeding:

- Become informed. Learn all you can about the benefits of breastfeeding and how to make it work for you to help you get through the rough spots. The first few weeks of breastfeeding are the hardest, but it does get easier.
- Learn how to relax. Try to find a quiet, comfortable, relaxing place to nurse. This will help make breastfeeding more enjoyable for you and your baby. Use this time to bond with your baby, listen to soothing music, meditate, or read a book.
- Sleep. Getting enough sleep will make you less stressed, help you to cope with challenges, and stay healthy. Try to sleep whenever possible.
- It really does take a village to raise a child. Talk to your family about supporting your goals of breastfeeding and how you need their support.
- Physical activity improves your mood. Your body makes certain chemicals, called endorphins, when you exercise. These help relieve stress and improve your mood. If you are a new mother, ask your doctor when it is okay to start exercising.

- Don't deal with stress in unhealthy ways. This includes drinking alcohol, using drugs, or smoking, all of which can harm you and your baby. It is also unhealthy to overeat in response to stress.
- Ask for help from a professional if you need it. Sometimes we don't know how to deal with problems. Talk to your doctor about safe medications that could ease symptoms of depression, anxiety, and help promote sleep; not all medicines are safe to take while breastfeeding. Read more about stress and medicines that are safe to take while breastfeeding at <https://womensmentalhealth.org>.



# Have you heard of ear infections?

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Typically, a doctor will treat ear infections with antibiotic and also may recommend over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, or eardrops, to help with fever and pain. A child who has a fever or other flu-like symptoms should not be given aspirin unless instructed by a doctor because aspirin is considered a major preventable risk factor for Reye's syndrome. Sometimes ear pain isn't caused by infection, and some ear infections may get better without antibiotics. Using antibiotics cautiously and with good reason helps prevent a resistance to antibiotics caused by excessive use.

## Preventing ear infections:

To lower your child's risk for ear infections, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends the following:

- Vaccinate your child against the flu. Make sure your child gets the influenza (flu) vaccine every year.
- Vaccinate your child with the 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate (PCV13). The PCV13 protects against more types of infection-causing bacteria than the previous vaccine, the PCV7. If your child has already begun PCV7 vaccination, consult your physician about how to transition to PCV13. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children under the age of 2 be vaccinated, starting at 2 months of age.

- Wash hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs and reduce your child's risk of catching a cold or the flu.
- Avoid exposing your baby to cigarette smoke.
- Never put your baby down for a nap, or for the night, with a bottle.
- Limit your child's exposure to other children as much as possible when your child's playmates are sick.



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