

Your Hospital Go-Bag

It's a daunting bag to pack—what will you need while you're in labor? How about right after the baby is born? If you've never been through it before, your list may stall at onesies and completely neglect your partner's inevitable need for Cheetos. Thankfully American Pregnancy, a national health organization committed to promoting reproductive and pregnancy wellness, has the lowdown on what should actually go into that hospital suitcase.

For Mom

- Paperwork and IDs:** Don't forget your health insurance card and any pre-registration forms from the hospital. Bring them in a big folder that you can use to store other paperwork you acquire.
- Breast-feeding support:** nursing bras, breast pads, and a good sports bra—good for a water birth or suppressing lactation if you're not breast-feeding
- Toiletries:** Don't forget a hair band or clip if you have long hair
- Sleepwear comforts:** nightgown and robe, slippers (during early labor you may have to walk around), and socks (many women get literal cold feet during delivery)
- Your going-home outfit:** Choose one that fit when you were 6 months pregnant
- Pillow from home:** Put a non-white pillow case on it to distinguish it from hospital pillows
- Mouth refreshers:** mints or breath strips (for nausea) lollipops or hard candies (for dry mouth)

For Baby

- Infant car seat and infant head support:** You will not be allowed to leave the hospital without one; make sure you bring the instructions

- Your baby's going-home outfit:** a onesie, hat, booties or socks, and mittens
- Receiving or swaddle blankets**
- Wipes** for newborns or sensitive skin

For Partner

- Change of clothes and toiletries**
- Snacks,** and maybe even a cooler filled with drinks and sandwiches so you can avoid the cafeteria
- Watch with a second hand** to time contractions
- Portable speaker** to play soothing music, which may help you and your partner relax both during and after labor
- Chargers** for phones, tablets, laptops, and speakers
- Massage oils** to help alleviate back labor
- Take-out menus** for nearby restaurants
- Gift for a sibling,** which will help little ones feel appreciated when they visit

What to Ask When Choosing a Pediatrician

Choosing a pediatrician is a challenge that parents face before their little ones are even born. With so many options available, it's important to find a doctor that can accommodate your schedule, as well as your parenting philosophy. Lauren Levine, M.D., of Columbia Midtown Pediatrics in Manhattan, suggests questions parents should ask when looking for a pediatrician.

Does your practice see children who are unvaccinated?

With the recent outbreak of measles, it's important that you and your pediatrician are on the same page about the potential risk of unvaccinated children sharing space with those who aren't old enough for vaccines.

If there are multiple doctors in the practice, will I see the same doctor each time?

For some children, consistency is crucial. If your family prefers a more intimate relationship with health care professionals, seeing the same person each time might be a priority.

Are you willing to give parental advice in addition to medical advice?

For first time parents, having a second opinion on topics such as sleeping and eating can be invaluable.

How difficult is it to speak with the doctor?

What is the appointment system? Can you call or email with a quick question? Some offices offer nurse triage services and online portals to answer non-life-threatening questions.

What is your on-call service like?

In case of emergency, it's important to know if and when your doctor will be available.

Do you see sick visits on the same day? How about weekends or evenings?

This is especially important for working families and those with busy schedules.

Are you board-certified by the American Association of Pediatrics?

Parents should always opt for a board-certified pediatrician.

What is your policy on antibiotics?

Whether you prefer to have a Z-pack for your child or firmly believe in toughing it out, you'll want to make sure you and your doctor are on the same page.

What sort of accommodations do you make for patients with special needs?

It's important to know that your pediatrician is adequately prepared in the case that your child is born with or develops special needs. Look for someone who is patient, has a subspecialty in special needs care, and is easy to talk to, according to Daniel Coury, M.D., medical director of the Autism Treatment Network at Autism Speaks.

Make the Most of a Parent-Teacher Conference

A parent-teacher conference is an ideal opportunity to get the lowdown on your child's academic life—but how do you maximize your limited time and get all the information you need? With the help of Dana Stahl, M.Ed., author of *The ABCs of Learning Issues*, Diane Marziliano and Danielle Monick, sixth and eighth grade teachers at M.S. 137, and Allyson Moyal, an Old Westbury mother of three, we compiled a list of the most important questions to ask.

Instead of focusing on your child's grades, ask more probing questions:

- What are my child's strongest and weakest subjects?
- Is my child submitting homework on time?
- What is the quality of my child's homework?
- Can you provide examples of my child's strengths and weaknesses?

If your child's teacher brings up any academic concerns, you may want to consider delving in deeper with questions like:

- What additional assistance or support do you recommend?
- Does a disparity exist between my child's knowledge base in class and her performance on examinations?

Social interactions at school can interfere with learning, so be sure to ask:

- Is my child getting along well with his peers?

- Is my child sought out during structured or unstructured time?
- Does my child have one or two friends with whom he feels comfortable?
- Is my child socially comfortable?

One of the most important things to discuss is the child's attention level:

- Is my child paying attention in class?
- Is my child engaged in lectures and assigned tasks?
- Does my child appear to zone out? Is my child actively disruptive?

If your child's teacher confirms your child is struggling to pay attention, you may want to ask:

- Is your level of concern for my child's attention issues sufficient to warrant a 'Child Study Team' meeting?
- Do you think an evaluation is warranted to understand why attention issues are present?

Remember, a parent-teacher conference is not only an opportunity for you to learn about your child, but an opportunity for his teacher to learn from you. Don't forget to offer your own information—especially if there is a recent event (divorce, move, new sibling, etc.) that might be affecting your child.

What to Do After Diagnosis

When you notice signs of delay in your child's development, your next steps may be unclear. INCLUDEnyc (includenyc.org; 212-677-4660; Spanish: 212-677-4668), the leading provider of training and information for young people (birth to 26) with any disability and their families, shares what you can do to secure educational, therapeutic, and community-based services for your child.

Early Intervention (birth to 3)

- This is a free program offered through the New York State Department of Health for eligible children with developmental delays.
- Children can receive physical, occupational, and speech therapies; counseling; assistive technology; respite, vision, and psychological services; and more.
- Find an office in your community at health.ny.gov.

Preschool Special Education (ages 3-5)

- Your child may receive special education services through the Committee on Preschool Special Education. When your referral is received, you'll be assigned a CPSE administrator and receive a packet that includes a list of evaluation sites.
- Select an agency to conduct the evaluation, which may include psychological, psychosocial, speech, physical, or occupational therapy evaluations.
- Then, you'll meet with CPSE to determine if your child is eligible for preschool special education services. If so, then an Individualized Education Program will be created.

Preparing for Kindergarten (children turning 5 by the end of the year)

- During the kindergarten application process, you're encouraged to attend

an orientation and submit applications in the fall of the previous year. An admission offer to register for a school, whether or not it will be final placement, will arrive mid-March. Special education services will be provided by the child's school or other arrangements will be made.

- At the same time, you'll develop a kindergarten IEP (the Turning 5 process).
- For children already receiving preschool special education services, your child will be referred to the Committee on Special Education. The only evaluation included in Turning 5 is a classroom observation and review of existing documentation. Additional evaluations can be requested.
- If your child doesn't receive services in preschool, but you believe he or she may need them in kindergarten, contact the CSE in your district and make a referral for special education services. A referral can also be made to the school's IEP team once a student enrolls or at any point after that.

School Age (ages 5-21)

- If a child enters school without an IEP, but you suspect they may have a disability, you can request an evaluation from the school's IEP team. Within 10 school days, you'll receive a consent form. The evaluation, IEP meeting, and offer of services,

if eligible, should not take more than 60 school days from the date the consent form is signed.

- If attending a private or charter school, make requests to the CSE in that school's district.
- Evaluations must be done in a language your child understands. Results must be translated into a language you understand.

Community-Based Services (all ages)

- The Office for People with Developmental Disabilities provides free services and support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Eligibility is determined based on disability and individual need regardless of family income and other insurance.
- Call your Developmental Disabilities Regional Office to speak to a Front Door team member and register for a Front Door information session, where you'll learn more about services and the OPWDD eligibility process. If your child is found eligible, you will choose a Care Coordination Organization to coordinate support and services.
- OPWDD eligibility requirements are the same for all ages though "provisional eligibility" may apply to children younger than 8. "Standard eligibility" needs to be established after age 8. Start scheduling evaluations when your child turns 7.

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5 Time Management Tips for Kids

Do you have an elementary school student who is exploring all of her various interests in after-school activities? Or is your high-schooler focused on band or soccer and working a part-time job? Whatever your child's after-school schedule looks like, learning time management skills will set him up for a lifetime of success. (Don't even get us started on college, when you have no control of her daily calendar!) Below, you'll find tips for helping him think through tasks and commitments to ensure everything gets done.

Avoid overscheduling.

It may be tempting to sign your child up for a different after-school class every day, but Melanie Wilson-Taylor, M.D., F.A.A.P., of South Slope Pediatrics in Brooklyn, recommends choosing the one or two she is *really* excited about. Limiting the number of after-school activities will help prevent stress and anxiety that can come with overscheduling. Plus, while homework may seem easy in September, as the year progresses, the amount and complexity of homework increases as your child learns new material. You can always sign her up for more extracurriculars later in the year.

Use an assignment book.

When it comes to keeping track of homework assignments, there's nothing better than having one spot he can jot down tasks for each subject. Emily Levy, Ed.D., founder and director of EBL Coaching in Manhattan, recommends students create a five-column grid for each day. The first (and widest) column should be for Assignments, then have Estimated Time, Actual Time, Order, and Done. Once your child gets home, she should think through her assignments, write an estimate for how long each task will take, and decide an order to tackle the assignments. After each assignment is completed, he should mark how long it actually took to help him better gauge future assignments. An "x" should be put in the "done" column only when the homework is placed in her backpack to take to school.

Determine an after-school schedule.

Pick up a dry-erase monthly calendar your child can use to note after-school activities, assignment due dates, sports games or other school activities, and work schedule (if you have a teen). Once the calendar is filled in with the extracurricular commitments, designate a block of time each day when homework will be done and stick to it, suggests Lisa Rappaport, Ph.D., a licensed psychologist in NYC. Will it be after dinner but before evening screen time? Will it be between when school gets out and dance class?

Designate a homework spot.

Whether it's at the kitchen counter, the dining room table, or a desk in the bedroom, having one spot where your child does his homework—that's stocked with all the supplies he'll need—will set him up for homework success.

Help assess larger assignments.

Help your child break down projects and long-term tasks into smaller steps that she can write in the assignment book, Dr. Levy advises. Think about writing a research paper; he'll need to create an outline, find sources, write the paper, compile a list of sources, and do final edits. With practice, she can use this strategy independently to successfully conquer bigger assignments.

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Tips to Host a Birthday Party

Whether you're throwing the bash of the year or taking a few friends to an amusement park, local moms reveal some helpful tips for planning a party for kids.

- **Select the Right Date:** Before setting a date, ask about your kid's close friends' availability. If you know your child's birthday falls near a classmate's big day, ask the other child's parents about their plans for celebrating. Send invites three weeks out.
- **Guest List:** For elementary schoolers, invite either the whole class, less than half the class, or only your child's closest friends. Ask about food allergies and get cellphone numbers if parents are dropping their kids off at the party.
- **Choose a Theme:** Let the birthday kid choose a theme—it makes all the other decisions (décor, invites, cake, etc.) much easier.
- **Timing:** Two hours is more than enough time for a party. Schedule younger kid's parties in the morning before nap time. For teens, set ending time earlier than needed to account for dawdling.
- **Invites:** Use an online invite such as Paperless Post so you can track RSVPs. The invite should say what is needed (for example, towels for a pool party) and what will be offered (i.e. cake and pizza at 12pm.)
- **Food and Drink:** Make sure you have enough for parents and younger siblings who stick around. Cut pizza slices in half. Make snacks and drinks simple and self-serve. Set out a large pitcher and cups for water.
- **Activities:** Set a schedule of events and alternate high-energy and low-energy activities. Also make sure there is an area designated for kids who may need a break from the stimulation.
- **Get Help:** Ask a friend or relative for help or hire a sitter for an extra pair of hands. Designate a photographer—someone who will make sure they get the important shots, so you don't have to worry. Take some photos before the party begins.
- **Balloons:** Use a bike pump to blow up balloons; buy helium balloons the day of party.
- **Party Favors:** Order in bulk online or buy from dollar stores (no need to spend much money on these). Don't personalize them—you never know who will or won't show up.
- **Gifts:** Save gift-opening for after guests leave. If you *must* open them at the party, remind your child about the importance of being thankful—even for the unwanted gifts. Another option is to forgo gifts and use a service such as Share Your Wish where guests donate money to be split between the birthday kid and the charity of choice. Be sure to send thank-you notes (email is fine) so guests know their gift was received.

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Camp Packing Lists

Whether they are leaving home for the day or for the month, sending your little ones off to camp can be nerve-racking. You want to give them every chance to stay safe, have fun, make friends and learn new skills. This starts with knowing what to pack in their camp bag.

Day Camp

Even though kids aren't spending the night, they still need to be prepared for the elements. The following essentials should be packed in a durable backpack that has extra side pockets:

- Hat with visor for sun protection and to shield their eyes during outdoor activities
- Extra clothes—they will get dirty and wet.
- Plastic bags for wet swimsuit and clothes
- Insect repellent wipes, which are easier for children to reapply
- A lunch that won't melt (hint: no chocolate) packed in a thermal tote bag
- A family picture to remind them of home
- Wet wipes
- Waterproof sunscreen with 30 SPF or higher
- Waterproof windbreaker or light jacket for rain or hikes
- Water shoes
- A reusable water bottle

Sleepaway Camp

Your child's sleepaway camp will provide a packing list, which will include the basics: shorts, T-shirts, towels, and flashlights. You should abide closely by that list. But what about those items that only experienced camp parents can recommend? We asked some sleepaway pros to reveal what off-list items they've learned are essential gear:

- Small backpack for day trips
- Waterproof watch
- Photographs of family
- Decorations for the bunk
- Clip on fan
- Duct tape
- Head lamp
- Shower caddy and shower shoes
- Pre-addressed and stamped envelopes
- Extra batteries
- Deck of cards
- Reusable water bottle
- Washcloths
- Baby wipes
- An extra pair of eyeglasses
- A costume
- A bunk organizer that hooks onto their bunk to hold flashlight, books, etc.
- Extra blankets
- A letter from home
- Floor mat to wipe their feet before getting into bed

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The Essential College Visit and Interview Checklist

College visits and interviews are valuable for the college to get to know your son or daughter as more than just a file. To make the most of a college visit and college interview, Tony Di Giacomo, Ph.D., educator and founder of Novella Prep, a college planning service, shares tip to ensure the college visit and interview are a success.

Pre-Visit

Before setting foot on campus:

- Review the Office of Undergraduate Admissions page for application requirements
- Explore the undergraduate majors page and relevant departmental pages

The College Visit

The following questions will help you gain insight into the college, and whether it is a good fit:

About the application:

- What kind of characteristics are you looking for in an applicant?*
- How much does GPA matter compared to standardized tests?
- How important are SAT or ACT scores?
- How much weight is put on the college essay?
- What percent of students are admitted early decision vs. regular decision? How do these applicant populations vary?
- What does your college value in terms of extracurriculars?

About the college:

- How does class size vary by college within the university or by major?
- What types of activities are available for students to get to know their peers and participate in the college community?
- What kinds of social activities are available to students, in the first two years?*
- How competitive are students? How collaborative?*
- How does this college make a student feel at home or not overwhelmed?*

About connecting college to career:

- Is there a formal process for career counseling providing support for students junior or senior year?
- What kinds of internships are available?*
- How active is the alumni network for supporting job placement or field interviews to learn more about potential career paths?*

The On-Campus Interview

Applicants who are able to request an on-campus interview, who are selected upon applying to

be interviewed, or who only have the choice for alumni interviews should take advantage of this opportunity to further personalize and showcase who you are.

An on-campus interview by admissions staff member:

In addition to asking the above questions marked with an asterisk (*), ask:

About the application:

- What does your college value in a resume?
- How much does GPA or class difficulty matter in comparison to test scores?

About me:

- Do you have any suggestions for me to improve my chances of admission?

The Alumni Interview

The alumni interview can include all of the on-campus interview questions, as well as:

- How did this college prepare you for your career path?
- What advice do you have for me as an applicant? In general?

How to Treat Common Stains

Who hasn't come across a surprise stain while doing laundry? Mary Gagliardi (aka Dr. Laundry for Clorox) says the first step is to *always* read the care label. If the garment contains spandex, use a color-safe bleach, such as Clorox 2, and avoid anything with sodium hydrochloride in it. Leather, suede, and silk should be treated professionally. For everything else, Dr. Laundry has the following advice:

If your clothing has these stains, replace the garment:

- Dried paint
- Permanent marker

An oil-based stain, such as pesto, marinara, or grease splatter from cooking:

- Treat the oil first, then worry about the color stain.
- Apply liquid dish soap to stain on dry fabric, rub it in, wait 5 minutes, then rinse with warm water.
- Repeat if necessary.
- Then, wash according to care label with detergent and appropriate bleach product to treat the color part of the stain.

Mechanical grease (bike chains or car oil) or set-in oil stains:

- Lestoil Heavy-Duty Multi-Purpose Cleaner is a fabric-safe solvent that's great for stripping oil.
- To test if it's safe for your fabric, apply a small amount to a hidden patch on the garment, wait a few minutes, and rinse.
- Apply Lestoil to grease stain as pretreatment, let sit for a few minutes, then wash according to the care label.

Diaper explosions:

- Rinse away as much of the stain as you can with cool water.
- If garment is white, wash in hot

water with detergent and ½ cup of bleach.

- If garment has color, apply color-safe bleach as pretreatment and wash in hottest temperature possible.

Vomit or spit up:

- Pretreat stain with detergent and rinse; then pretreat with color-safe bleach and wash.
- For cold-water washing, soak the item in a gallon of water with detergent for 30 minutes before washing.

Blood:

- Liquid Clorox 2 works really well because the hydrogen peroxide in it breaks up the blood proteins.
- For a fresh stain, apply pretreatment, let sit for 10 minutes, and rinse with cold water.
- For dried on blood, do the pretreatment twice, then wash according to care label.

Grass and mud:

- Rinse off as much mud as possible, even if it's already dry.
- Presoak the garment for 30 minutes in cool water mixed with powder detergent that includes an enzyme.
- Pretreat with appropriate bleach product, then wash according to care label.

Non-oil-based food stains:

- Pretreat with appropriate bleach product, then wash according to care label.

Red wine:

- Pour club soda on stain, which will help rinse out the wine.
- Apply appropriate pretreatment and wash according to care label.

Sweat or pit stains:

- If the shirt is white and 100-percent cotton, machine wash in hot water with regular bleach.
- If not 100-percent cotton, pretreat with liquid detergent containing an enzyme or Clorox bleach pen gel.
- If neither works, experiment with a different deodorant.

Lipstick:

- Lay out a washcloth on a table, place garment on top with stain facing the washcloth. Take another washcloth with liquid detergent on it and blot the stain, pushing detergent through fabric. This pushes the stain from the garment onto the washcloth.
- Repeat above step, moving washcloth on table around so you're working on a clean spot.
- Once lipstick no longer transfers, apply appropriate pretreatment, then wash on hottest temperature possible.

8 Things to Do When You Move

Congrats! You just found a home to raise your children in! While moving can be overwhelming (especially with small children in the mix), there are some often-overlooked tasks you'll want to tackle ASAP. On the other hand, there are also things you may think need to be done immediately that can be moved to your long-term to-do list. Sarah Fishburne, director of trend and design at Home Depot, weighs in on what to do before moving, on move-in day, and after moving to make the process a little easier.

Before Moving In

Change the locks on external doors.

Nearly 37 percent of new movers don't do this, according to a survey conducted by Home Depot. It's easy to do, whether you tackle the project yourself or hire a locksmith. After all, you never know who might have keys to the old lock.

Replace the keypad if you have an automatic garage door opener.

The directions for resetting the pin probably got tossed long ago, so it may be easier to install a new one, Fishburne advises.

Fix any issues noted in the home inspection.

In the home-buying process, you'll want to have an inspector look through the house to ensure everything is up to code. If there is anything noted as an issue, it's important to take care of that ASAP—especially since it could affect your homeowner's insurance policy.

Get a homeowner's insurance policy (or update your renter's insurance).

Once you have these policies squared away, make hard copies and store them in a fire-proof safe as well as in a secondary location should something happen to your home. Other documentation to keep in the fire-proof safe are birth and marriage certificates, bank statements, passports and driver's licenses, health insurance, mortgage papers, social security cards, car titles and registrations, and legal documents.

Move-In Day

Call utility companies to update your accounts.

Cancel services at your old address. At the same

time, schedule appointments (if necessary) to set up services at your new home if you're using the same company. Otherwise, set up accounts with new providers. While you're at it, update your address with credit cards, bank statements, subscriptions, and friends and family.

Tackle unpacking rooms one by one.

It's not realistic to get the whole house unpacked as soon as the last box is unloaded from the moving truck. Concentrate on getting the most-used rooms unpacked first (the kitchen, bedrooms, bathroom, and living room), then move on to play rooms, offices, etc., Fishburne advises.

After Moving In

Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

If they're old, you'll want to install new ones, which have improved technology—and some have batteries that can last for 10 years, Fishburne says. At the very least, put fresh batteries in existing detectors.

Make small changes to personalize your home.

Without committing to a total renovation, there are easy modifications you can make that will have a big impact. Change out the handles on doors and cabinets, replace towel bars and curtain rods in the bathrooms, and swap out old light fixtures, Fishburne recommends. Paint will become your best friend (or perhaps enemy) in making an old space feel new. Paint rooms, kitchen cabinets, your front door, and even the exterior of the house. And, of course, give your home some curb appeal with flowers, new numbers, and even a new mailbox.