

Traveling with a Baby

As with almost everything else connected with babies, the key to success is preparation. Here are some tips to consider when traveling with your baby.

Car Travel

ALWAYS use a car seat when you take your baby or child in the car. If you are planning a long car trip (over an hour), here are some ways to keep your baby interested and occupied:

- Use ribbon or yarn (no longer than 12 inches) to hang toys from the clothes hooks in the back seat.
- Tape some pictures facing your baby so he has something interesting to look at.
- Tie or hook some toys to the car seat. Your baby can enjoy the toys without requiring retrieval every 5 minutes.
- Take a break at least every 1 and 1/2 hours unless the baby is sleeping--then stop as soon as he wakes up.
- Babies don't like the sun in their face any more than we do. Use either a wide brimmed hat or block the sun with a car window shade or a piece of cardboard attached to the car seat and/or window. (Make sure you can still see out of the car!)
- Keep a wet washcloth or towelettes in the car for sticky, sweaty baby hands and faces.
- Bring snack foods appropriate for the age your baby.
- Bring snack foods for yourself and for older children in case your baby decides to sleep through scheduled dinner stops and you decide to make time rather than stop and wake the baby up.
- Always keep cold water in a Thermos and bring disposable plastic cups.

Air Travel

Most airlines offer special discounts when booking a seat for children under 2. Children under the age of 2 years travel free on most airlines, but this means that they may have to sit on your lap if the plane is full. When you make your reservations, try to avoid a full flight. (Babies must be at least 7 days old to fly on any airline.)

- There are FAA-approved car seats. Check on this when purchasing your car seat. It is best to let the airline know ahead of time that you will bring a car seat.
- A car seat is generally not counted as a carry-on item as long as your child is sitting in it. If you stow it in the overhead because your child is sitting on your lap, it's counted as one of your carry-on's.
- If possible, reserve a bulkhead seat (just behind the bulkhead that separates coach and first class), because it has the most room. Ask the airline if they have bassinets that attach to the bulkhead wall.
- If you can, schedule your flight to avoid the busiest times of day at airports (8 to 10 AM, 4 to 7 PM).
- Give yourself plenty of time--arrive at the airport and check in early so that you can get the baby settled before others board the plane.
- If you are traveling by yourself and won't be met at your destination, a portable stroller is a lifesaver. You can generally fold it up and take it on board with you.
- If you have to change planes, be sure to schedule additional time for the connection.
- For takeoff and landing, put the seat belt just around you and hold your baby on your lap

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or put it in a front carrier. Don't place the seat belt around the baby.

- Remember that your baby's ears may plug up or hurt on takeoff or landing due to the change in cabin air pressure. Swallowing helps equalize the air pressure. You can help keep your baby's ears clear by nursing or feeding when the plane is climbing and descending.
- Diapering can be a hassle on the plane. Try to double-diaper or use ultra-absorbent disposable diapers just before you board the plane, and then change in the airport bathroom after the flight arrives. (If you do change diapers on the plane and are using disposable diapers, you can use an airsickness bag to dispose of them.)
- The flight attendants can warm food and bottles for you. Be sure to also bring small snacks your baby can nibble on and play with (such as Cheerios, bagels, etc.).
- Be sure to clean up your seat area before you deplane.
- Given all the equipment you have to carry when you travel with a baby, it is easiest to let other passengers deplane before you.
- Car rental agencies generally have infant seats available with their cars. You need, however, to reserve the seat when you reserve the car. It is also wise to call ahead to the local agency where you will pick up the car to confirm that the car seat is available.

Train Travel

Traveling on a train is one of the safest modes of transportation. Because train travel is a slower form of travel, you'll be able to take in sights and walk around with your baby.

- Child safety seats are allowed on board if you reserve a seat. But there are no safety belts to secure the seat.
- Arrive at the station early -- don't rush to your train.
- Babies under the age of 2 years travel free on Amtrak.
- Try to get seats facing each other, so you can put the baby in the seat across from you.
- Temperatures can change on the train, so dress your baby in layers of clothing and remove or add as necessary.
- Be sure to bring appropriate food. The train will probably have a dining or snack car but bringing snacks will prevent you from having to move throughout the train with your child, which is safer and more convenient.
- Amtrak offers children's meals and will heat a bottle or baby food. They will also refrigerate baby formulas or foods for you during the trip.

Restaurants

- Have some toys that are reserved only for restaurants (make sure they are not too noisy).
- Let your older baby play with ice in an unbreakable cup.
- If you are breast-feeding, you can breast-feed most easily in a booth that is out of the main traffic flow.
- Put your baby in the high chair just when the food is served--that will help prevent her from becoming restless in case there is a long wait after you order.
- Unless you want your baby to eat the restaurant's crackers, bring snacks for your baby to eat.
- Feed your baby before you go to the restaurant if possible.
- You may want to take a baby food grinder along to share some of your dinner with your baby.

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- Babies generally make a mess--be sure that you clean up before you leave, and that you leave a larger tip than normal for the staff.
- Ask for a table by the window so baby can watch the sights outside.
- Avoid restaurant foods for your baby that spoil easily: cold meats, fish, eggs, foods with mayonnaise, etc. Order milk only if it comes in its own container.
- If your baby becomes disruptive in the high chair, take her for a stroll outside or to the restrooms or let her have some time on your lap. (This is a last resort, because once on your lap she may not want to go back to the high chair.)

Hotels or Friends' Homes

Before you leave home:

- Pack electrical plug covers for outlets in the house or hotel room.
- Pack a few familiar items that the baby has in his crib at home (such as mirror, blankets, or stuffed animals).
- Reserve a crib at the hotel and ask if there is a family section. If not, ask for a more secluded section of the hotel so your baby will not disturb others if he cries at night.
- Ask for a non-smoking room on the lower level. This makes it easier when bringing in luggage and baby supplies.
- Ask if there is a refrigerator in the room. Some hotels will put a temporary refrigerator in your room for an extra charge.
- Find out where the nearest store is so you can buy diapers and snacks. Also find out if the hotel has a restaurant that has baby friendly foods.
- If you travel frequently, it may be wise to invest in a portable crib for your baby--that way you can confine the baby and you'll sleep more easily.

When you arrive:

- Move any dangerous objects in the room out of the way. Cover sharp corners with blankets.
- If you have been traveling all day, take time to do some activities with your baby before putting him to bed (such as swimming or bathtime).
- Follow your baby's normal eating, sleeping, and bedtime routine as much as possible.
- If your baby is used to sleeping in her own room, you may need to sit quietly in the bathroom or outside the door while your baby falls asleep. Bring a good book to read while you wait.

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