

LIFEHACK

for moms

A fun book for loving moms!



Author Maria Savina

2018

Maria Savina

**Lifhack for Moms. A fun
book for loving moms!**

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“Lifhack for moms” is an honest book for first-time mothers. It is not meant to teach you how to raise your child in a proper way. It will show you how to make those first months of motherhood easier, happier and more comfortable. In this book you will find everything you need: from the useful shopping list for a newborn to lifehacks that will show a new mother how to find time for everything, lose baby weight and enjoy life in a new status even if she gets enough sleep only on public holidays.

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Lifhack for Moms

A fun book for loving moms!

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Acknowledgements

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All mothers and experts who answered my endless questions;

And all of those who helped, supported and waited eagerly.

Dedicated to all new moms out there...

What is the most important thing about child care? Throughout my pregnancy I've read tons of books, magazines and articles on the Internet on how to organize breastfeeding, bathe a baby, tell the difference between a bodysuit and a sleepsuit, and choose the right kind of pram suitable for Siberian snow drifts.

In these nine months I've managed to read the equivalent of Encyclopaedia Britannica, and surely I knew everything about child care. Well, I was wrong.

After my son was born I realized that I did not read about the most important thing. Apparently, it is all about being a calm and sane mother, which is not so easy to achieve when you sleep only on national holidays and have a colicky baby by your side.

I remember making myself wake up in the mornings after six good night sleeps, each lasting about 18 minutes. "Good morning, sunshine!" I would say to my son, thinking: "I hope I can make it to the evening".

During the day my son was pure angel. He was looking around, making funny noises and smiling to his mommy. Surely *he* was having enough sleep! Sometimes though, there were drills during the day as well. Like a bolt from the blue, this tiny baby would suddenly turn on a siren so loud that windows were rattling, and I would rush to his crib, throwing unpeeled potatoes into the soup as I went. So what was that about a calm and sane mother?

It turned out that there was absolutely no point in reading articles such as *How to Decorate a Nursery in Pastel Tones* or *The Best Nursery Rhymes for the Little Ones*. It would have made more sense to read something like *How to Survive if you Sleep Four Hours a Day*, *How to Salvage Badly Bitten Breasts* or *10 Ways to Reach Nirvana During Baby Colic*.

It is not really accepted to complain after you've had a baby. Society believes that new mothers must look happy 24/7, always smile and flutter about on the wings of maternal happiness. In reality, every new mother knows about lack of sleep, lack of time and backache. The first months (or even years) of motherhood is a borderline between happiness and a nervous breakdown. All-consuming love for your child lives side by side with horrible anxiety, and infinite happiness goes hand in hand with tears of exhaustion. In short, the words "paradox" and "motherhood" should be synonyms.

If you find yourself at a loss while reading this, you probably do not have children yet. And if you do, then you are probably the father, not the mother.

I truly hope to cheer up all new mothers and tell them honestly and openly: "Yes, we all go through the same things! I know it is not easy for you now, but it will get better with every month! Yes, he (she) will really sleep better one day!"

Right now, many months after the birth of my son, all those first challenges seem like nothing. Only drafts for this book, like a black box from a plane, allowing me to remember those difficult times when I was worn out and cried from exhaustion (((and wanted to run away to the Maldives))))

With time I found harmony and got used to my new lifestyle. I already had my own little tricks about easy child care, our favorite routes and places for walks, our simple little games and small joys. I learned to find time for everything and concentrate on the most important. I learned how to enjoy the little things. And I learned all of this from my son.

There I was, already giving advice to my friend who was soon to be a mom. She was bombing me with questions about diaper brands, right number of wheels in a pram and the best form of breastfeeding pillows. I was writing all those lifehacks down and sending it to her one by one. Then she gave birth, and her questions changed direction to *When am I going to get enough sleep*, *How to survive days that are exactly the same* and *When is it going to get easier*. I tried to cheer up the new mommy, telling her about my experience. I told her all those things that I longed to hear when my son was born.

Some time later another one of my friends gave birth, and we had exactly the same conversations. This is how my personal experience made its way to becoming a whole book.

Lifhack For Moms is a compilation of ideas and advice which helped me. I wrote honestly, with a great deal of self-irony and endless love for the main character in this book – my son Matvey.

This book is not going to teach you how to raise a child. Here you will not find any strict rules of breastfeeding, first baby foods or early childhood development. I just wanted to help all new mothers make their first months of motherhood a little bit easier, happier and more comfortable. I would be very glad if you did not worry too much and enjoyed more of those happy minutes of being with your little one.

This book contains simple advice on how to bathe a newborn baby or dress him/her for a walk, as well as lifehacks on the most burning issues such as “How to teach a child to fall asleep easily”, “How to find time for everything” and “How to get back in shape after birth”.

Although I have only one child I consider that I do have enough knowledge about motherhood. Moreover, some chapters contain advice from experts and opinions of other moms.

I would be happy if you find something useful in this book and put it into practice. But please, do not take it too seriously and do not consider it to be the ultimate manual of child care. Take into consideration only those things which comply with your own views and just laugh together with me at the main hero of this book and his crazy mother.

By the way, there is something that is not written anywhere. You could read all about swaddling, bathing and breastfeeding, easily cite Sears and doctor Spock, and practice carrying your cat in a sling... But you will never be ready for motherhood. I am talking about the feeling that you are a mom now, and your life will never ever be the same again. And it is amazing!

Have fun reading!

Chapter 1. Shopping for a newborn



There will be no special lifehacks in this chapter, but since I claimed that this book will be useful for future mothers, it is important to begin with baby essentials shopping list. It is something that every mom-to-be would really need. I remember googling what to buy in preparation for a baby and finding tons of different checklists. I tried finding out what they had in common and wrote out all the differences. In short, I was (((wasting my time))) doing research.

It turned out that there are not that many things which are really essential to buy before the baby arrives. But who will stop a pregnant woman from shopping? I know how much pleasure it brings so I am definitely not going to stop you. I will just write a list of things that came in handy personally for me.

I. Things you need to buy before the baby is born:

1. *Baby bed.* Most future parents start by buying a crib. I would say that in this case brand does not matter. Your baby cannot read yet so he/she won't know that you bought a locally manufactured bed instead of a fancy Italian one. Moreover, let me assure you that in the beginning your baby will probably sleep everywhere else but in his own bed – i.e. in your bed, in a pram or in your arms. Our son boycotted his bed and screamed every time when we tried to put him in there (apparently he did guess that it was not Italian design!)

Nevertheless, even if you are a fan of natural parenting and co-sleeping, you still need a baby bed, simply to put a child in it when you are going to take a shower. This way you will be sure that your little one does not roll anywhere or fall.

There are many bed choices available: on wheels, stable ones, rocking ones... We took the one on wheels. Many times we just moved the bed around, following feng shui or just at random. So the wheels turned out to be very useful. It is very convenient to move such a bed around, rocking the baby to sleep. I guess those rocking beds would also work for that purpose, especially during the first months as they would help to calm down a newborn child.

Make sure to buy soft bumpers for the bed so that the baby will not bang and hurt him/herself or stick his leg between the rods.

There are baby beds that could be put right next to the parents' bed, which is very convenient. In that case the gap between the beds can be filled with rolled towels. It is a great compromise for those moms and dads who want the baby to sleep next to them but are not fond of the idea of sleeping in the same bed with the child. We are those type of parents, so it would have worked perfectly for us, but we made a big mistake of not paying attention that both mattresses must match in height. So it turned out that even if we lowered the bottom of the crib, it still would not have worked.

This is why we decided to buy a baby bassinet that attaches to the parents' bed. It worked perfectly for the first months. I loved that thing, but by the time my son turned five months old, it was already too small for him.

2. *Mattress* for the baby bed should be hard enough and does not sag easily.

3. *Waterproof cloth* under the sheet. It is better to use the one with soft surface that absorbs moisture.

4. *Fitted sheets* the right size for your mattress (2—3 pcs.).

5. Instead of a blanket, which is easily pushed away by restless little legs, use a *baby sleeping bag with a zip*. It is important that the size of a neck-hole is smaller than the size of a baby's head.

6. A *cotton blanket* is a very useful thing. For example, you can use it on a walk when a sunny day suddenly gets a little cooler.

7. *Fleece throw blanket* for winter walks and traveling in the car.

8. *Baby changing table* with a chest of drawers (two in one). You need it to change a baby, store diapers and take care of your back. Do not forget to buy a soft mattress with bumpers. It is better to use a washable mattress (we had an inflatable one).

9. *Trash can with a lid* (for used diapers) and a basket for dirty clothes and baby linen. All these things should be put next to your changing table.

10. *Towel*. Any soft type is good, but it is convenient to use the one with the hood. There are many cute funny towels with bear ears or other little details that will lift up your mood.

11. *Air humidifier*. This device is often absent from baby shopping lists for no good reason. Good humidity level is important for child health.

12. *Video baby monitor*. It is an essential device for home, as well as for traveling. Even when a baby is asleep in his/her bed, any normal mother would come check on him/her every once in a while. Put the monitor next to you, watch your cute sleeping baby and enjoy your cup of tea! I was even taking the monitor with me to the shower, because through the sound of the running water it always seems like the baby is crying. I suppose the brand does not really matter. It is important that the device works properly. Our baby monitor also has a feedback button (such a useless function), Chinese soothing music (even more useless) and a thermometer (which shows an outright lie). But overall it is a great device!

13. *Baby pram/stroller*. This topic is definitely a success with marketing specialists. Any pregnant woman will be exhausted from choosing and comparing all the different models available on the market. Transformers, baby carriages 3 in 1, with four wheels or three, with hand brakes and a special step for the older child, and even with an indicator whether the baby is in the pram or not... I am not joking, there is really such a thing! I am convinced that the most important thing in a pram is its reasonable weight, especially if the architect who designed your house did not have children and thus did not make any ramps (such is the case with our apartment block).

14. Baby carriage needs a *rain cover* (often comes together with the carriage) and a *mosquito net* for the summer.

15. *Child safety seat*. Technology is ever improving so you can read about the currently safest seats yourself. The most important thing is that for the first months it must be a seat from 0 or 0+ category, where a child does not sit upright. It is more reasonable to buy a safety seat with a wider

age range in order not to buy a new one after some months. Such seats have a special infant insert that is used for newborns, and when a baby grows and can sit, the insert is easily removed.

16. *Diapers*. The size is easily determined by your baby's weight. Each pack has a weight range (0—5 kg, 4—8 kg and so on). During the first year we tried all famous diaper brands. Not because we (or Matvey's bottom, for that matter) were not happy with a particular brand. Only his bottom was naturally getting bigger, so at some point diapers would start to leak, and we had to switch to other brands.

17. *Baby wipes for hygiene care* (when for some reason running water is not available). It is a very useful thing when you are on the road, at somebody's house or elsewhere.

18. *Disposable baby care underpads*. In terms of brand, it could be anything. The purpose and function of these things are all the same anyway. Underpads are used on a baby changing table, when the baby is left laying naked for some time, or when you are not at home, visiting your friends or at the doctor's.

19. *Swaddles*. I would suggest buying several pieces (for example, muslin or flannel ones, 3—5 pieces of each). Later you will decide for yourself if you need some more. These things are not expensive and will not affect your budget, even if you end up not using them. There are swaddle blankets with velcro fasteners, but I learned about them late and we did not have a chance to use them. However, I am sure that it is a genius invention because our Matvey could easily unswathe himself just like Houdini, no matter how tight we swaddled him.

20. *Baby tissue paper* or simply *soft napkins*. Number of pieces – limitless. We cut a couple of flannel cloths to smaller pieces in order to clean the baby's face when he was possetting, as well as wipe everywhere else that would get in his way. We kept a couple of such napkins in every room not to run around searching for them every time we needed them. It is washed with the rest of baby clothes. As an alternative, you can use disposable tissue paper (extra soft one, made especially for babies).

21. *Clothes*. I do not recommend buying a lot of clothes of the smallest size for a newborn. When during your pregnancy you get a shopping rush and want to buy all those cute little shirts and pants (and I understand you!), it is better to take only a couple of things for 0—3 months, and the rest (especially warm clothes) already for 3—6 months. There are some things which I bought that my son Matvey did not even wear because they were too tiny for him from birth. And I took time choosing them carefully! Also, for the first months the process of dressing a baby (in comparison with buying clothes for him) is far from being a pleasant activity. I would say, too far from it. Sometimes during this process your baby will scream so much that you could lose your hearing for a while. This is why it is better to make do with the good old swaddling than have a nervous breakdown trying to fit a tiny baby hand in a sleeve of that cutest polka-dotted shirt which you so lovingly chose to buy.

A list of first clothes for a baby who cannot crawl yet

Summer:

- cotton bodysuits with short sleeves – 3—4 pcs.;
- cotton footed pants – 3—4 pcs. (but you could go directly to sleepsuits if you want);
- cotton sleepsuits (same as bodysuits but with long sleeves and closed feet) – 3—4 pcs.;
- cotton caps – 2 pcs.;
- cotton blanket (throw) for walks;
- newborn mittens

There is no need to buy any warm sweaters or other types of warm clothes for walks in the summer. If necessary, it is easier to cover a baby with a cotton blanket or a swaddling blanket.

Summer lasts three months (sometimes one and a half in Siberia), and by autumn you would already need to buy clothes of a bigger size. Well, if you *really* want to buy that cute little sweater... Who would stop you? But I suggest buying it in a bigger size (3—6 months).

Autumn/spring:

All the same things as for the summer, plus:

- knitted cap;
- warm hat;
- warm knit sleepsuit or a light fleece one without lining;
- fleece sleepsuit with a lining;
- light bunting suit (60—80 gram fill insulation);
- warm fleece throw blanket.

You can buy all winter clothes in autumn as well. However, if your baby is born at the end of April, for example, there is no need to spend money for a winter bunting suit which will already become small for him/her in the upcoming autumn. It is better to take a non-expensive warm envelope blanket and a fleece throw.

Winter:

All the same things as for the autumn/spring, plus:

- warm woolen socks;
- winter bunting suit (250—300 gram fill insulation) instead of a light version mentioned in the previous list (you can buy that closer to spring)

I would recommend buying a bunting suit made in your home country or the one with similar climate. For example, our Siberian son Matvey felt very warm in his Finnish bunting suit by Kerry (Finnish brand). It easily resists cold up to -25°C , and is very convenient to put on and zip up.

It is better to buy a bunting suit a little bit bigger than your baby's size so that you will not end up buying a second one in the same season (because children grow fast, and in the first few months – very fast).

This is just a suggested list of clothes. Quite possibly, moms with experience will point out some important things, in their opinion, that are absent from this list. Let's put it this way, I wrote about the basic sets which you will definitely need, and the rest you can decide for yourself and buy what *you* consider to be important.

Let's continue.

22. *Sterilizer*: for bottles, pacifiers, baby rattles and breast pump. It is not an essential thing but quite a useful device to have in your household. Just pour some water, push the button – and all your things are clean in 6 minutes.

23. *Breast pump*. Manual one is the most popular. Even if you manage to avoid breast engorgement, it is a useful device, in case you need to express some milk to feed the baby when you are away.

24. *Bottles* (for water, expressed breast milk or an infant formula) must fit to your chosen breast pump. It is better to choose bottle teats with the smallest flow.

25. *Pacifier*. Every mother decides for herself whether she gets her baby used to pacifiers or not. In the beginning, having my head full of “natural parenting” during the pregnancy, I decided that I will never give Matvey any pacifiers. Then I realized that, as in the case with any extreme theories, it is better not to be so opinionated. Most importantly is that the baby, as well as his parents, feel comfortable about it. Matvey did not suck on his pacifier 24/7, but sometimes I would give it to help him go to sleep. If I needed to calm my baby down, I would always hold him or give the breast. The pacifier was not a replacement for his mother, and he did not develop any addiction to it. People who think that pacifiers are universally evil tend to dramatize too much. In any case, it is up to you to decide. If you end up buying a pacifier, buy two (as a rule, one always gets lost when you need it or falls on the floor). A special clip with a chain will prevent a pacifier from falling.

26. *Baby bouncer*. This is not essential but a very useful thing. Baby put in a bouncer can always stay next to mommy and watch her when she is busy.

27. *Baby bathtub*. Newborn child can be bathed in a normal big bathtub but a special baby bathtub will save you water and time for pre-washing. When a baby learns to sit, such a bathtub is also convenient. We used a special bath support in the beginning, but only for the first week. You could easily do without it. A bath stand, on the contrary, is very useful as it will save mommy's back.

28. *Baby care products*:

- baby soap;
- soft hair brush;
- baby scissors or nail clippers;
- nasal aspirator for that tiny nose;
- cotton pads;
- moisturizing cream;
- nappy cream (if your baby develops a rash, but you do not need to buy it beforehand);
- baby laundry detergent (it is better to use it for all the things which come in contact with your baby's skin: baby clothes, bed sheets);
- baby shampoo.

29. *Baby medicine cabinet*. A minimum of things which you will need:

- bath herbs (you can buy special kits for babies or separate packs of chamomile and beggarticks);
- bepanthen;
- hydrogen peroxide;
- paracetamol suppositories (for infants);
- baby oil;
- saline solution for nose (nasal drops for babies, not spray);
- thermometer (electronic one is better, ideally the one which can immediately tell the temperature).

As for the special medicines which must be present in your home, please consult your pediatrician.

30. *Baby rattles and other toys*. In beginning one or two rattles is enough. They help to distract your baby from crying, but mainly are a source of entertainment for mommy and daddy, not the baby.

31. *Baby crib mobile*. Another non-essential but useful thing. Babies are fascinated by the way the toys are moving. However, they will not be interested in a mobile right away. It will happen when your baby learns to focus on something and starts to understand that it is not that boring to lay in bed.

II. Things to buy for a new mother

While making a list of baby essentials, do not forget to make a list for yourself as well.

1. Comfortable *maternity bras* – 2—3 pcs. They support swollen breasts and expose the right amount of breast for breastfeeding when you need it, in one swoop. You will also need nursing pads. In the very beginning when your lactation is still not settled and out of control, milk comes in big quantities and wets your lingerie.

2. *After birth belly wrap*. I cannot estimate the efficiency of this thing as my after birth period happened to be in scorching heat in the summer, and it was a torture wearing it. But people say it helps to get back in shape after you've had your baby.

3. *Postpartum pads*. You will need them for about a month – month and a half (here all men close the book). To maintain a high level of hygiene it is important to change them very frequently.

4. *Lansinoh (lanolin) for breasts*, to soften your bitten nipples (now really *all* men close the book). Bepanthen mentioned in the previous list is also good for curing war wounds of a woman who started her journey on a long road of motherhood.

5. *Breastfeeding pillow*. Some do without it, but personally for me this pillow was irreplaceable when I was breastfeeding when seated. You could sit in a big armchair, put on this life saver, surround

yourself with books, films and cookies with tea – and sit like this for hours with the baby on your breast, enjoying the slow beginning of motherhood. It is better to have two pillowcases for this pillow so that you could easily change them when they get dirty.

6. *Nursing clothes*. When I decided to buy nursing clothes, I realized that many manufacturers think that new mothers must look beautiful only to their baby, and forget about the rest. In beginning I did buy a couple of those ugly dresses and tops, but then among my old clothes I found some items that could work as nursing clothes as well. For example, tops with straps, shirts with buttons – anything where you can easily reveal the breast. In any case, it is important to remember that any nursing clothes will inevitably get dirty with baby possetting. This is why it is reasonable not to use any Dior dresses for that purpose unless you are sure that white stains will give it some extra charm.

7. *Fitball* (fitness ball). Usually people buy it for the exercises while pregnant but this thing can be used after birth as well. It is such an amazing device for rocking your baby to sleep. Your back and hands will not be as tired as they would get if you are rocking the baby while standing. But do not get too carried away, your baby might not intend to become an astronaut. Moreover, you will need that ball for baby gymnastics as well. If you do not mind its big size, fitball is a great thing to have at home.

8. *Sling*. My Matvey was not fast to approve this idea. My first attempts to put him in a sling failed, and he would run away from me (and he could not even crawl yet!) It was only when he was about three months old that we finally managed the sling thing, and I learned how to wear it and walk with it.

The sling is a great thing, even if you are not a fan of natural parenting and constantly keeping the baby on yourself. The sling allows you to do many things with both hands. If you are going for a walk with a sling, there is no need to carry that heavy pram around. The sling saves you time (you can read about this in the chapter about time management).

9. Wide all-purpose *multifunctional shawl*. Light cotton shawl is the simplest thing which will be useful in many situations:

- to cover up when breastfeeding in public (at a friend's house, on the plane, etc.);
- to cover the pram when your baby is sleeping (to make it more comfortable);
- to hide your child from the sun when you are traveling in the car;
- to act as a wonderful accessory for your stylish look and cover the possetting stains on your clothes.

III. Things you will need later (you do not need to buy it before birth):

1. *Playpen* is something you might need when your baby learns to sit and crawl. Some modern theories criticize playpens saying that it is not good to restrict the baby's desire to learn more about the world. But nobody is saying that the baby will sit there 24/7. It is more a question of security. When the mother desperately needs to go to toilet, it is better to put the baby in a playpen than leave him/her on the floor exploring, as it would mean to put your child's health and life at danger. As a child, I had a whole room as a playpen. There was nothing but the carpet, toys and two sisters. Couch pillows played the role of a fence. Unfortunately, not everyone has a spare room for that purpose.

There are many playpens on the market and they all look kind of the same, but for the second time I would buy a small playpen/baby bed, two in one, with a standard mattress size. I think such a bed is a great idea when you travel somewhere with a child.

2. *Potty*. Potty designers have amazing imagination, but the most important feature is that the potty should be stable.

3. *High chair*. We inherited ours from Matvey's cousins. It was beautiful, soft, comfortable... but absolutely impractical in terms of cleaning. Every time when Matvey had his meals, his chair would be covered in food which would get in impossible places and far corners. The stitches on the chair were made of artificial leather, so they would easily soak in something like carrot juice. In short, it was an everyday challenge.

We did not buy another chair, but I would advise my dear readers to buy a washable, completely wooden or plastic high chair that is easily cleaned. I would say a baby's bottom in a diaper does not feel uncomfortable on a hard chair, but you could easily buy an extra pillow if you feel like the baby needs one.

4. *Bib*. Get a plastic one that has a pocket, which is essential. The pocket will collect the things that fall. It is convenient to have a second bib as well (while the first one dries after washing).

5. *Tableware*. You will need: a sippy cup (with two handles), a couple of plates (children love the ones with pictures on the bottom), fork and spoon (it is more convenient for children to hold utensils with round handles, not flat).

6. *Toys*. The two most important things about toys are: safe materials and appropriate age group. But here is my observation: no matter how interesting and vibrantly colored modern toys were, Matvey spent more time playing with the old Soviet classics – weeble-wobble, toy blocks, humming top and ring stacker. I guess the love for these toys is genetic. Plus the ball, of course.

I also recommend buying big boxes or containers for all these treasures. They make it much easier to tidy up and teach your child to put away his/her toys.

Buying for your baby is a never-ending process. I think baby shopping business can be compared with drug dealing. Every year so many new parents fall into its net, leaving all their family budget in baby shops, and it is quite impossible to “get off this needle”.

I should say that all those most trendy and modern things for children contain a heavy dose of marketing. Smart marketing specialist do not stop thinking which hippopotamus will please babies the most: the blue one or the purple one? Which toy rattle is the best for physical coordination development? Which function to add to the pram to impress new parents? Maybe an automatic scale to measure the baby's weight or the mood detector? Or maybe a GPS navigator? On-board Wi-Fi?

Sometimes you get so caught up in this shopping rage for all the latest things that you do not even notice how you buy another newest development for an insane amount of money, and later it turns out to be useless. I remember buying these awesome colorful wax crayons in the shape of an egg, “suitable for a baby's hand”. Red, blue and yellow. Three crayons for 650 rubles (around \$12 / €11). I spread out a big piece of drawing paper on the floor and showed Matvey the magical colorful lines which he could create with these crayons. After that I gave one to him. Drawing grabbed his attention for exactly 20 seconds, after which he savored half of the blue egg. Since then all my attempts to persuade my son to draw with wax eggs ended in the same way. He was only nibbling on them. Later I gave him a simple ball point pen which cost 8 rubles (around 15 cents). Of course, Matvey immediately started drawing with it, taking the pen correctly since the first try, just like a first-grader.

Certainly, there are expensive baby products that totally justify their cost. However, it does not happen that often. To make planning and shopping a bit easier for you, below is the full list of all mentioned things without my comments.

Shopping list

I. For the baby

1. Baby bed + soft bumpers.
2. Mattress.
3. Waterproof cloth (1—2 pcs.).
4. Fitted sheets (2—3 pcs.).
5. Baby sleeping bag.
6. Cotton blanket.
7. Fleece throw blanket.
8. Baby changing table with chest of drawers + soft mattress with bumpers.

9. Trash can with a lid.
10. Basket for dirty clothes.
11. Towel (better with a hood).
12. Air humidifier.
13. Pram/stroller.
14. Rain cover and mosquito net for the pram.
15. Child safety seat.
16. Diapers (2 packs, first size).
17. Baby wipes for hygiene care (better take a couple of packs).
18. Disposable underpads (same here, you will need a couple of packs).
19. Swaddles (4—6 pcs.).
20. Baby tissue paper or soft napkins.
21. Clothes.

Summer:

- cotton bodysuits with short sleeves – 3—4 pcs.;
- cotton footed pants – 3—4 pcs.;
- cotton sleepsuits – 3—4 pcs.;
- cotton caps – 2 pcs.;
- cotton (throw) blanket for walks;
- newborn mittens.

Autumn-spring:

Same as for the summer, plus

- knitted cap;
- warm hat;
- warm knit sleepsuit or a light fleece one without lining;
- fleece sleepsuit with a lining;
- light bunting suit (60—80 gram fill insulation);
- warm fleece throw blanket.

Winter:

Same as for autumn/spring, plus

- warm woolen socks;
- winter bunting suit (250—300 gram fill insulation) instead of a light version mentioned in the previous list (you can buy that closer to spring)

22. Sterilizer (not essential).
23. Breast pump.
24. Bottles, fit for your chosen breast pump (with smallest flow bottle teats).
25. Pacifiers – 2 pcs., clip on chain.
26. Video baby monitor (not essential).
27. Baby bathtub.
28. Baby care products:
 - baby soap;
 - soft hair brush;
 - baby scissors or nail clippers;
 - nasal aspirator;
 - cotton pads;
 - moisturizing cream;

- nappy cream;
 - baby laundry detergent;
 - baby shampoo.
29. Baby medicine cabinet:
- bath herbs (special baby kits or separately packs of chamomile and beggarticks);
 - bepanthen;
 - hydrogen peroxide;
 - paracetamol suppositories (for infants);
 - baby oil;
 - saline solution for nose (baby nasal drops);
 - thermometer.
30. Baby rattles.
31. Mobile for the crib (not essential).
32. Baby bouncer (not essential).

II. For the mother

1. Maternity bras – 2—3 pcs.
2. After birth belly wrap.
3. Postpartum pads (4—5 packs).
4. Nursing pads for bras (2—3 packs).
5. Lansinoh for breasts.
6. Breastfeeding pillow (not essential).
7. Nursing clothes (not essential).
8. Fitball (not essential).
9. Sling (not essential).
10. Wide shawl (not essential).

III. What you might need later

1. Playpen (not essential).
2. Potty.
3. High chair.
4. Bib – 2 pcs.
5. Tableware; sippy cup (later a simple cup), plates (2 pcs.), spoon and fork.
6. Toys + boxes or containers to store them.

Have a great shopping experience!

Chapter 2. First days after birth



Mother Nature thoughtfully gifted a woman with (((memory like a sieve))) oxytocin, in order for all labor pain to be forgotten so that a woman would absolutely willingly want to go through all this torture again. It is so amazing how fast we start to think that it was really not that bad and hard, and

yes, painful, but just a little bit. Even if you clearly remember that during labor you were thinking: “Never again!!!”, your brain will still make up excuses to actually do it again. Maybe then it was like this just because you did not have enough sleep, or the doctor did something wrong, and to tell the truth, the weather was kind of bad as well. Anyway, it seems like everything was quite tolerable. Actually, these kind of stories are usually told to a friend who is about to give birth. And then she calls you right after birth, screaming: “Why did you lie to me?! Is THAT not painful?! I nearly died!!!” Then again, some months after giving birth, the very same friend tells her pregnant acquaintance: “Labor? Well, it is fine, not a big deal. I had it quite smoothly...”

This is the magic of nature. No matter how hard labor was, pain and weariness disappear in an instance, as soon as you see your newborn baby for the first time and hold him/her to your breast. You smile and cry from happiness, hear your baby’s first cry, feel him/her on your skin, this tiny warm miracle on your breast... Day and night you are looking at this cutest peaceful face, and cannot get enough of it. It never happened to you before. You became a Mom!

I. A little bit of physiology

To enjoy motherhood to its fullest after birth, you need to know some facts beforehand. In the following section we will speak about physiology, so if there are any men among my readers, then maybe it is better that you skip to another chapter.

1. For a better after-birth recovery without any complications, it is important to *lay on your belly as much as you can* (you finally get an opportunity to do so after 9 months!) and stand as much as you can. This way your uterus will get rid of all the excessive stuff much faster. Stand up and walk regularly, even within the borders of the postnatal ward. You can just stand by the window and muse upon passers-by who are hurrying somewhere and do not even have the slightest idea that the whole world has just changed.

2. *If your baby swallowed some blood when he was moving through the birth canal, then some time later he will be posseting with terrifying blood clots* (nobody told me about that so the first night after birth when it happened I started panicking and called for a nurse).

For this reason, you have to put the baby on his/her side first nights after birth. In order for him/her not to turn to his back, roll a blanket or a towel and put it behind the baby’s back to support it. Do not forget to change side on which your baby is sleeping (interchange left and right side).

3. *It is important to know some of the specific characteristics of a newborn.* This will help you to avoid unnecessary worries when you meet your baby for the first time.

– a newborn baby who just came into this world, does not have a pink skin like we think. It is more of a red tone, blueish or even purple. Do not panic! Soon your newborn will adapt to the unfamiliar surroundings and will become your typical rosy-cheeked baby. Feet might still stay a bit purple for some days, though;

– in the beginning your baby will look a bit wrinkly and crooked. No wonder! Imagine spending some months in a small cask! With time your baby’s back will become more straight, you will see the neck, and his arms and legs will get straight as well;

– a newborn baby cannot hold his head yet, his neck is too weak, so make sure you always support the head when you pick up and hold your baby. Do not let any abrupt movements in the neck area. If necessary, ask a nurse to show you how to hold a baby carefully and safely, including the times when you give him/her a bath or perform hygienic procedures;

– your baby’s skin might slightly peel off in the beginning, especially on the back, palms of his hands and on the feet. This process will soon come to an end by itself;

– some babies may have red vascular spots on their body (more often on the head). They will also disappear on their own, though not so fast (usually it takes more than a year);

– you might find white spots (like little cysts) on your baby’s face (especially on the nose). These spots are called *milia*, or milk spots. They usually occur due to the clog of the sebaceous glands. You do not have to do anything about them, they will disappear on their own in the course of some weeks;

– baby’s first feces are dark-colored, even black. When you start breastfeeding, it will gradually change color to yellow or a little bit ginger, quite runny in consistency. It can also contain white grains of undigested breast milk.

4. *Until the milk comes in, your baby will actively draw drops of colostrum.* And by “draw” I mean “gnaw until the nipple is bleeding”. To save the breast you can regularly apply Lansinoh to the nipples. You do not have to wash it off before breastfeeding. If you develop some serious war wounds (which happens to a lot of us), apply Bepanthen to your nipples directly after breastfeeding (and wash it off with running water before next breastfeeding session).

5. *When your milk comes in* – it is an important event. If it comes unnoticed at night, the following morning new mother wakes up under the two hot stones. I mean, breasts. In the day time you can react fast and start expressing excess milk with your breast pump, in order to avoid engorgement. If you feel that your breast is too hard, hot and hurts (this is engorgement), then express some milk until it feels better. Do not express all of it until the last drop because milk comes in in the same quantity as was expressed (or eaten). On the day when milk comes in (usually it happens on the second or third day after birth) and the day after that, do not go heavy on drinks, or you will be flooded with milky rivers.

Perhaps, for some time you will regularly fight with engorgements because in those first days after birth many new mothers produce milk for wholesale. Be patient, soon it will be fine, and your body will produce the right amount of milk according to the needs of your baby.

6. *Right after birth your belly will not go away completely,* it will probably look like you are 5—6 months along again. Your uterus has not contracted to its normal size, it will need about 6—8 weeks to do that. Breastfeeding contributes to a faster contraction of your uterus, and you might feel it when you are feeding your baby (it might be a bit painful).

7. *Do not forget to go to the toilet regularly.* Even if you feel like you do not want to. I know it sounds strange now, but wait until you give birth.

8. To feel more calm and confident in the sphere of baby care when you return home, *do not be shy to ask for help from a nurse at the hospital.* Ask her to show you how to swaddle a baby, change a diaper, etc.

II. A little bit of psychology

When I returned home from hospital, I had a feeling that I was absent for more than a month instead of just four days. Like I had just returned from a long trip. And it looked like everything was the same, but you see it with different eyes... No wonder, because your new life has just started!

The first weeks with a baby require determination. However, if you become a mom for the first time in your life, it is not that easy to get ready and gather yourself beforehand. But if you know that you are not alone with those difficulties and worries, it is easier to start your journey of motherhood. I was somehow not aware of the main difficulties, and all those things that I read during my pregnancy turned out to be not that important after all. From the books I learned how to swaddle and bathe a baby, fight baby colic and many other everyday things. But nobody wrote that the above mentioned colic can bring the parents to the boil. In fact, those books only superficially mentioned all psychological difficulties that might await the new mother. Mothers/grandmothers also kept silent, pretending that they did not have any of those problems, and wondering why I am complaining about the lack of sleep and weariness.

Meanwhile, the birth of your baby is a huge psychological stress. After birth hormone levels are unstable, there is physical and emotional weariness, constant lack of sleep, various fears and doubts – new mother experiences all of this, together with the infinite happiness, of course.

This book is titled “Lifhack for moms”, so here you will find numerous great ideas and advice about different topics: how to put your baby to sleep, how to dress him/her according to the weather, what your breastfeeding diet should be and how to get back in shape after birth. But below you will

find a few words about something else. It is not really lifehacks, but they are definitely the most true-to-life and much needed words of support for all mothers.

1. *Let's begin* with proverbial *lack of sleep*. Perhaps, you will be lucky and win the lottery titled “Calm baby who sleeps good since birth”. But it is more likely that you will become a member of a social club whose participants monosyllabically answer “Idontgetenoughsleep” if you ask them “How are you?” Just be assured that everyone goes through the same things. Well, excluding the winners of the above mentioned lottery and those who gave birth around 20 years ago and more (as the latter simply do not remember anything).

Even if a baby sleeps good at night, the new mother might have her own sleep disorders. Moms sleep very light and little, so they do not even see dreams, as their brains do not have time to make them up.

Get ready it is not going to be easy in terms of sleeping for the first year (or even longer). Just accept this as a fact and as something temporary, and please do not worry, even if it feels like it will never end. Trust me, everything will surely get better!

For me sleeping problems were an issue number one. At some point it felt like I needed to feed on freshly squeezed caffeine to survive. Only breastfeeding stopped me from that, so I completely understand you, my dear not sleeping moms. Especially for you I wrote the longest chapter of this book with detailed advice on how to improve your baby's sleep. In short, if your neighbors know all lullabies by heart and in the mornings you hear them singing: “Twinkle, twinkle, little star...” – then do not hesitate to open this chapter.

2. Be ready that for the first time it might feel like a *groundhog day*. Yes, now you have all the time in the world to enjoy motherhood and your baby. However, sometimes it might feel like every new day is exactly the same as the one before, and the most interesting things pass you by. Somewhere out there people have fun and go to shows, solve global problems and organize important meetings. They throw parties and go mountain skiing. And you? In the whole day you changed nine diapers and breastfed thirty-three times.

Wait, what was that about global tasks? Isn't that the most important and global task that you have right now in front of you – to bring up a Human being? There is no one who would bring up and care for your baby better than you. Your little one just recently came into this world which feels like a totally different planet to him/her, where everything is so strange and unknown. In this world there are new ways to breathe, move and see, not how he/she was used to... Only mother can help a baby to adapt and feel safe in this new world. That is why, if you find yourself in the same position for three hours in a row, breastfeeding, do not worry. At this stage this is the only thing that you need to do. Just be patient, stock up on some good books and some hypoallergenic cookies.

And please do not worry that you do not have enough time for everything. This is not important right now. You can take that shower tomorrow. Or after tomorrow.

3. There is one more difficulty that all new mothers face. *In the beginning it is very hard to understand a baby*, who does not have any means to show what he/she needs, other than crying. If your baby is screaming and you do not understand him/her, it does not mean that you are a bad mother. It is impossible to recognize all intonations right away. You will get this with time, because you feel your baby like no other.

Your baby knows it too. And it is usually the mother who a baby turns to if he/she needs something. It is the mother who is expected to help and understand. This is why sometimes it might seem that with other members of the family your baby is somehow calmer than with you, his/her mom (or father). More likely, it is not just a guess. And it is not because there is something wrong with you. It is because a baby always expects more from the person who plays the biggest role in his/her life. Usually, only mom will help if a child is scared, hurt or cold, and will bring the feeling of peace, warmth and confidence, showing that everything is fine.

One of the chapters in this book contains lifehacks on a topic of “How to calm down a crying baby”.

4. The next very important advice to all new mothers – *do not forget to rest from taking care of your baby*. Yes, you heard it right! If going out just means going to the shop to buy new bibs and bodysuits, if you hold your cat up after every meal to burp, if for every partner’s phrase you automatically have a nursery rhyme ready in your head – then it is time to take a break!

Be it a meeting with your friend or a swim at the swimming pool, or going out to see some movies – it is not important what you choose. The main thing is that the chosen activity must help you to relax and gather strength. A calm and happy mother – this is what your baby needs (and your partner as well!)

You can find advice on how to find time for yourself in the chapter “Maternity time-management”.

5. And the last advice in this chapter for those who recently stepped on the path of motherhood. You have already read and continue to read so many things about children. The Internet and magazines pour out advice and different approaches to parenting. Books compete in promoting different theories and attempt to teach us “the right way to raise a child”. French children don’t throw food. German children easily go to bed at 8 p.m. Neighbor’s Johnny sleeps all night since birth and goes to toilet strictly in his potty.

Do not believe in everything you read and hear! New parents get buried under so many categorical statements and other people’s “right” examples. It is easy to think that you are doing something wrong.

I got caught up in this trap so many times. Especially in the first months when hormones are raging in your body and replace common sense. However, maternal intuition and my son looking happy and carefree returned my ability the ability to think adequately.

Reading books and learning from more experienced people is wonderful, but it is important that it helps and does not make you neurotic, constantly thinking you are raising your child wrong. Those who breastfed their baby following the schedule and put the baby to sleep in a separate bed since birth, start to worry that they had missed something important when they read about “natural parenting” and co-sleeping. On the other hand, after reading another book, those who breastfed their baby on demand and constantly carried him/her in their arms, start to question their approach and worry that the baby will grow up spoiled.

As you can see, they are two completely opposite theories, and there are plenty of arguments for each of them. But in the end the most harmful thing in both cases is the mother’s worry about her so-called mistakes. Maternal intuition and unconditional love for your child – these are the best fundamental things for your baby’s upbringing.

Read, learn new things, but do not let other people’s words make you question one thing: you are the best and the most proper mother for your child. Do how you feel is comfortable specifically for your baby, specifically in your family. All advice and information from the books and the Internet should firstly go through the filter of your own understanding and your maternal intuition, including this book.

Chapter 3. Lifhack for daddy

Long before birth I enthusiastically started compiling all sorts of lists: list of things for a newborn baby, list of things to take with me to the hospital, etc. Among these lists were directions for my beloved husband Artemy. I specified all the things that he would need to do while his precious wife was at the hospital.

While working on this book, I decided to include this list in my literary opus. Later I got an idea to write a whole chapter for future fathers. However, this chapter would have been lopsided if I wrote it all by myself. Then I asked my husband a question: “What advice would you give to men who are soon to be fathers?”. The first thing that he said was: “Spend all days of your annual leave for the time after birth because your wife will really need you”. This answer made me fall in love with my husband once again.



On my return from hospital I was physically and emotionally exhausted, and it brought me immense happiness to be together with my family all days long. All the memories about difficulties of the first days are already erased from my memory, but I know for sure that at that moment my husband's attention and help were more important than any present. So, my dear future fathers, instead of writing “Thank you for our son” on the rear window of your car, better give your wife all your time and surround her with care.

Usually fathers are more relaxed about the process of caring for a baby. This is something that amazes me the most. Even if they put on a diaper backwards and cannot tell the difference between a bodysuit and a sleepsuit, daddies can handle any task. Fast, easy and without a nervous breakdown.

I remember how terribly worried I was on those first days when Matvey was crying and I did not understand what he needed. Artemy, my husband, would just pick the baby up and start reciting Pushkin's fairy tales, walking around the room. Matvey would easily calm down and be fast asleep, listening to the famous Russian poet (I am talking about Pushkin, not my husband).

And so it happened always, in every situation. Fathers are not obsessed with the idea of doing everything "the right way", they do not worry if they do not know something and do not panic about first snots or wrong colored poop. They just know that they can handle it, and everything will be good in the end.

Anyhow, despite the huge responsibility, I will take the liberty to write this chapter. "Lifhack for daddy" contains advice for future fathers. This is the only chapter written in collaboration with my husband, so it also contains the male opinion on the subject of having a new little family member. I hope it is unbiased.

I. To men: what you need to do while your partner is at hospital

1. Remember that first days after birth new mommy will be obsessed with sterility because a little baby needs clean and fresh air. So before taking your wife home from hospital, do a big cleaning up. Wash the floors and wipe all existing surfaces so they will be free from dust. Ideally, wash all the curtains and throw blankets, and clean all furniture (all of this you can do before the birth date). In this pursuit for sterility you do not have to wash half of the planet with bleach. It is enough to do thorough wet cleaning and air your home regularly.

2. The car that you will use to meet your wife and the newborn baby from hospital should also be washed. By the way, do not forget about the child safety seat.

3. Try to finish all your personal errands before birth so that you do not have anything to do for the first few days after your partner's return from the hospital but to stay with your family. If you want to celebrate the birth of your baby with your friends, better to do so while your wife is still at the hospital.

4. Buy all groceries beforehand, keeping in mind the diet for nursing mothers. Study the list of things recommended for women who breastfeed (the list is in this book), so that you do not tempt your partner with chocolate and oranges (in case your baby develops an allergy).

5. It will be great if you learn about baby care beforehand. How to change a diaper, how to swaddle, bathe, etc. This way you can actively participate in caring for your baby from day one and will be able to offer a great help to your partner.

6. Think about a nice little surprise for your partner when she comes home from hospital. There is no need to hire an orchestra to celebrate the birth of your baby, of course. It could be some cute little thing that you give her in private. For example, a special piece of jewelry that will always remind her of this important family event. My husband presented me with a beautiful necklace and put vases with flowers in every room. I really appreciated this gesture. Well, to tell you the truth, some of the bouquets I noticed only about four days after we came home from hospital.

II. What to take with you to hospital when you come to take your partner home

1. A blanket-envelope for a newborn (or a bunting suit) and some clothes for your baby according to season (ask your wife for more details). Take extra couple of outfits, just in case. For example, some of the things we bought for Matvey turned out too small since the very first day. He was quite a big boy.

2. A couple of diapers (in case you will need to change it on the way home).

3. Clothes and shoes for your partner (if the ones that she had on when she came to hospital are not her size anymore or not right for the weather on the day when she goes home).
4. Flowers and presents for your beloved partner.

III. New life. For future fathers about the most important

That's it. She gave birth. Slowly you begin to realize that you became a father. I really do not want to give you any persistent advice. However, there are some important peculiarities that you might not know or notice.

1. Your wife's emotional state can go through dramatic changes after birth. You cannot escape this hormonal rage, even if post-natal depression does not touch your family. A new mommy can easily get upset about some little thing, cry when watching a melodramatic film or listening to a moderately teary song. This is all hormones. She might also look back on her birth for the 500th time, sometimes saying that "everything did not go the way I wanted". When it happens, you need to listen to her, nodding your head understandingly, and at the end say something reassuring and kind, like: "You are the best, my darling!"

I had this hormonal emotional turmoil for around three months, no less. I could start crying when watching how cutely Matvey slept, smiled or said "Agoo".

Just be aware of this peculiarity and be patient. And stock up on tissues and chamomile tea.

2. New mommies also worry about their figure that, let's be honest, not many people will find really appealing. Support your wife, love her for who she is, even if now her belly is not in its best shape. Maybe her waist is not the same as before, but you can enjoy the new beauty of her full breasts. In any case, it is quite possible to get back in shape after birth (and you can delicately remind it to your wife from time to time). Support your wife in getting her old body back and (((take away her chocolates))) exercise together!

3. Prepare for sleepless nights. It is not easy, especially in the beginning. Just know that it will end with time. Try to take some days off, if possible, otherwise you run a risk of regularly falling asleep at your office desk, using documents and folders as pillows.

4. For these first days when a new mother is exhausted, your help with household chores will be much needed. Cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, participating in baby care – be ready to help with all of this. Even if you do not usually do this, it is nice to temporarily take responsibility, letting your partner recover after birth and devote all her attention to your baby.

After some time the whole family will adapt to this new lifestyle and it will become much easier and more fun! And your beloved wife will be endlessly grateful for your help and care.

5. It is essential to give the new mom a possibility to take a break from household chores and baby care. You have no idea how much it is important for her health, and therefore the health of your baby.

If your wife refuses to leave the baby even for half an hour, do not listen to her. It is not common sense speaking, it is a mere prolactin hormone. Send her to a spa salon for a massage, and your wife will return with fresh vigor, beaming smile and tastier dinners!

A little side note for the mommies (since you are reading this chapter anyway!): trust your husband! If you left your baby with daddy for an hour, do not call every five minutes. Do not question your partner's abilities! Do not check if he dressed the child correctly. Ok, so maybe your partner did not read anything about swaddling, bathing and first baby foods. Maybe you are scared when he throws your child in the air, carried away by fatherly love (it is good if ceilings in your house are high). Maybe you are worried for your baby. But just believe in your partner. He can do anything! Well, maybe apart from breastfeeding.

And for the men again

6. The first child changes everything about your relationship. However, your partner is not only the mother of your child. She is still your loved one. She needs not only your care and help but also your attention as your beloved woman. While going to the shop to buy baby food, buy some flowers or another cute little present for your wife. Among everyday routine, find time to be together. When all your day consists of feedings, changing clothes and changing diapers, women find it hard to think about the relationship with their partner on top of all that. Her only wish is to fall face down in (((the soup))) the pillow and not move. But it is still possible to find time for the two of you. In the evening, when your baby falls asleep, drink some tea together, talk about everything, make inspiring plans for the future. Have a romantic evening!

There will be very hard days when your baby cries a lot and behaves badly because of colic or teething, and everyone in the family gets exhausted. At these moments, try to support each other and keep up good spirits in the family. When your baby finally falls asleep in the evening, have some beer and a milkshake for your wife with some calming herbs, and watch a good movie.

7. Fathers of sons especially want their child to grow up as fast as possible. He cannot even crawl yet and constantly hangs on mom's breast, but you already want to teach your son everything: play hockey, do push-ups, hammer nails and build spaceships. But do not rush. Enjoy every moment of your baby's life, because this time will never be repeated. Time will fly so fast! Today you will teach him to do stacking rings, and tomorrow he will teach you to use the new smartphone.

I remember when our Matvey was born it was the time of the FIFA World Cup. The new father was watching matches in the nights while rocking our child. And I, the mother (thanks to this championship!), was sleeping. In the morning I took over, so we were taking turns. One year later Matvey learned to kick his first ball. Hockey is up next.

8. Some have a talent to give endless advice to all who are unable to resist. If inexperienced parents become victims of such advisers... Co-sleeping or teaching the baby to sleep in his own bed since birth, breastfeeding on demand or schedule, until one or three years old... Now the Internet and the books are full of a lot of advice and radically conflicting theories about a child's upbringing. New mothers easily feel at a loss and start doubting themselves. Am I doing everything right? Am I a good mother? It is hardest in the beginning because you not have enough experience yet, and the baby expresses his needs only by screaming, and you do not always understand him\her. Some men do not pay much attention to these things but new mothers sometimes find it hard to feel all this pressure from all the theories, advice and opinions of other people. Do not let anyone (not the Internet, not relatives, not your neighbor with three kids) make your partner doubt that she is the best mother for your baby and feel its needs better than anyone else. Do not doubt yourself as well! If you need advice – read about it or ask someone yourself. Then you can decide what to do.

Now your head is busy dealing with all important tasks in connection with the expansion of your family. You think about the future and make plans. You feel responsible for your family because now not only your own life is in your hands. You are impatient to see the baby who is about to come into this world.

And then in an instant it will happen. You will become a father. And your life, your whole world will never be the same again.

You will be bringing up your child and celebrate all his\her first successes. You will become a role model. You will see how your baby makes the first steps in his\her life. You will hear how he \she says “daddy” for the first time.

This tiny newborn will be radiating so much warmth and love, so many hopes and joy and happiness for you! You will understand it all yourself when you hold your baby for the first time.

Chapter 4. Baby care



It is so amazing how our values and priorities change with the birth of a child! A long time ago I was so much into work, I cared about the political situation in our country and the best deals on plane tickets to faraway places. And then my universe suddenly collapsed to the size of 55 cm and 3870 kg. Now my main worry is not the crisis in the economy but green snot and a blocked nose. Body temperature higher than 38,5C is simply a disaster on a global scale!

And I am not alone in this. When a baby is born, many new parents have lots of questions. “What to do with him/her now?”, “How to take care of this beautiful tiny creature?”, “How to protect his/her health?”. Especially that this very creature will not tell you anything specific, only “a-a-a” in different keys. You start having a lot of duties that you did not even think about before. For example, clipping baby’s nails. Did you see how tiny they are? Compared to them even the smallest baby scissors will look like gardener’s tools!

The following list will help you care for your baby since the first days of his life. The following pieces of advice can hardly be considered unique lifehacks. It is just some useful tips for those who became parents for the first time.

I. Caring for a newborn

1. Bathing

You can, and in fact should, bathe your baby since birth. Of course, until umbilical wound is not fully healed, do it very delicately. Try not to let any water get inside it. It is enough to use only

a wet sponge, you do not need to fully submerge your baby in the water. By the way, for these first days it is better to use filtered, boiled or settled water (it is enough to let it stay for one hour).

Some pediatricians recommend adding pre-made solution of potassium permanganate, some – an herbal infusion of beggarticks. Later, when the umbilical wound heals, you can use simple tap water and bathe a baby in a big bath.

Baby soap is used in beginning only for washing the baby's bottom after he makes big toilet. There is no need to bathe your baby with soap since birth. It is enough to wash the baby's head one time a week.

Make sure that you support baby's head and neck with your hand while bathing. It is much more comfortable to support the head with the crease of your elbow.

Water temperature should be comfortable for your baby. I am not a fan of reckless cold water training since birth. It is recommended that the water temperature for first baths should be around 36—38 °C.

How to easily check the water temperature without thermometer? Dip your elbow in the water. You should feel neither too hot nor too cold. This will be the ideal temperature. Some days later you can start *gradually* lowering the temperature (and it will be ideal if you go down to 30 °C).

During bathing pay special attention to all skin folds. Newborn babies have very deep skin folds. They are found in armpits, groin, neck (which appears absent in beginning) and skin behind the ears. I remember that breast milk regularly trickled down behind my baby's ears, so when I saw this white coating of uncertain origin behind his ears, I thought it was some skin condition.

First few months every time after bathing put on a light cotton cap on your baby's head to avoid hypothermia. Do not forget to close the window in the baby's room before exiting the bathroom. However, do not deliberately heat up the room, in fear that your baby will feel cold.

2. *Umbilicus*

It is very easy to care for the umbilical wound. After bathing you can gently dab it with a cotton ball wetted with hydrogen peroxide.

3. *Nose*

The tiny nose needs everyday cleaning. It is done with handmade cotton swabs that you roll from medical cotton wool. Wet it with liquid paraffin. Every nostril needs a separate small cotton swab. Gently give it a twist inside a nostril.

Remember that the most important thing for that tiny nose's health (and all other body parts) is a clean humid air. That is why your first purchase for the bedroom should be the air humidifier. Wet cleaning is an important everyday ritual as well, along with nose cleaning.

4. *Nails*

One of my most vivid impressions right after birth was seeing my son with long nails. While pregnant I pictured his cute little face and chubby baby legs and arms. But that manicure!.. For a long time I postponed nail clipping and the first time it was done by a child doctor who came to check up on my son. Eventually, I got the hang of it and started cutting these tiny nails while breastfeeding.

By the way, some find it easier to use special baby nail clippers for that purpose, not scissors.

5. *Diapers*

I think we have used up tons of diapers. In the beginning I was wondering how often I should change them. It turned out that in the beginning your baby will regulate the frequency of diaper changing. More specifically, it is his\her big toilet after almost every breastfeeding session. And I should say my son was feeding on demand and with great appetite.

Many modern diapers have a special wetness indicator. I actually noticed it by the sixth month.

If you need approximate numbers, I would say that in 24 hours we were using around 8—10 pieces, considering that we changed it every 2—3 hours and were leaving the baby naked for a while. Speaking of this, try to leave your baby naked as much as possible to let his skin breathe without a diaper, when he is not sleeping. At this time, you can put your baby on his belly (knees

apart, like a frog). Like this you get him\her used to lower temperatures, air the skin folds between the legs and prevent colic.

Baby powder is considered to be an essential part of baby care by many, but it can actually form pellets and cause irritation in the skin folds. It is better to use modern nappy creams if you notice any rash. If your baby's skin is fine, you do not need to use any cream at all, not even as a preventive measure.

6. *Infant seborrhea (cradle cap)*

It is not uncommon to encounter infant seborrhea. It is yellowish patches that form on a baby's head and eyebrows. It is not hard to get rid of it, but necessary. Just apply some mineral oil on these scales a couple of hours before bathing and put on a cotton cap on your baby's head. After that wash the baby's head thoroughly with the baby shampoo and gently brush the hair with a soft hairbrush. Two or three days of such procedures, and the seborrhea will disappear.

I remember that once, in this fight with cradle cap, I applied mineral oil to Matvey's head. But my son did not wait for his evening bath and suddenly fell asleep. With mineral oil in his hair. I asked my husband: "So what do we do now?" Without a word, he brought a bowl of warm water and a sponge. Together, sitting in a dark room, we were washing our sleeping son's head. Matvey was peacefully asleep during the whole procedure and did not even make a sound.

II. Baby's health

Most people are born healthy,

It is the doctors who make them ill...

O. E. Komarovsky, famous Ukrainian pediatrician

I am not a doctor, so here you will not find advice on how to cure baby illnesses. However, like any normal mother, I gathered a lot of useful information about how to keep a baby healthy. I will be happy if you also find it useful. So here it goes, my personal list of advice.

1. In some countries it is possible to call a doctor for advice but it may involve extra costs. If you have such an opportunity, find a good pediatrician and take their telephone number. Phone consultation can help in many situations when you need to start treatment as soon as possible, without losing time, and it will save new mommy's nerves.

2. *Fresh air* is an essential condition for child (and adult) health. Maybe it is the most common advice in this book, but do not underestimate its importance. Go for a walk! Every walk is not just circling the park. It is an everyday additional plus for your child's health. For this reason alone, it is worth it to take out that baby carriage even if there are no ramps in your house.

When you are at home, also let some fresh air into your house. Air the rooms as often as possible. Open all windows for ventilation when you go for a walk. If you stay home, you can carry your baby from one room to another, airing each room in turn. Do not be afraid of open windows, especially in the summer.

3. *Air humidifier* is an essential device in the house with children. Humid air is important for the sensitive baby skin and respiratory organs. In winter sometimes it is not enough to only turn on your air humidifier. Additionally, you can put wet towels on radiators.

4. *Massage* is beneficial for all babies. It is recommended to start doing massage starting from one month. There is a therapeutic massage which is done by professionals, but a common, general massage is something which you can do yourself, especially knowing that massage done by the parents is more pleasant for a baby. There are some great books about baby massage and gymnastics for beginners that can be done by parents at home.

5. *Cold training* – many associate it with bathing in ice cold water and walking barefoot on the snow. However, it is not only these entertaining activities. It is introducing your child to different temperatures, water and sun. It is also getting some fresh air every day, adequately dressing your baby

according to weather, not wearing socks inside the house and bathing. All of the mentioned things help to toughen up your child.

6. Important *conditions for recovering from an illness*. I will not describe any specific illnesses here, and it is not reasonable to diagnose “online”. However, there are some simple yet very effective steps that will help your child to recover faster from any form of cold, and not only cold.

The steps are:

- airing the house regularly;
- air humidification (because in humid air mucus from the nose is discharged faster, and phlegm is easily expectorated while coughing);

- cool air in the nursery (around 20 °C, not higher than 22 °C). And do not forget to adequately dress your child so that the body temperature is naturally regulated (by spending the energy to warm up the inhaled air), and mucus does not dry up (which happens when the temperature is higher than 22 °C), otherwise it will be harder to expectorate phlegm;

- increased warm fluid intake (breast milk, dried fruit drink or water) to help thin the blood, remove toxins and lower body temperature. If your baby quickly loses water as well (for example, sweats or, God forbid, vomits or has a diarrhea), it is crucial to rehydrate, because while losing water your baby also loses all nutrients. To rehydrate you can give your baby a sugar-and-salt solution (sold in pharmacies). If you do not have it, give a simple dried fruit drink which is also rich in nutrients;

- put a few drops of saline solution to the nose (to moisten the nasal mucous membrane);

- if the condition of your baby is not serious and there is no fever, going for a walk is very beneficial.

All above mentioned advice will help to fight off the illness, not only for a baby, but for an adult as well.

Please note again, that I am not a doctor and all of the above are just suggestions to help your baby recover but it is not a universal cure from all illnesses.

7. *Household safety*.

- if your baby is choking over something:

Learn the first aid actions to perform in this situation (when a foreign object restricts breathing). You will not have any time to look for this information somewhere and it might be too late when an ambulance comes. There are different techniques (such as Heimlich maneuver), each of them used on children of various age: from newborn to older children. It would be perfect if you watch video tutorials (for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4uS5EmpeEs>). Practice on teddy bears and relatives, and you will feel much more confident and calm;

- if your baby puts something in his nose:

When your baby learns to crawl, regularly check the floors and all surfaces for small objects. Never try to take the foreign object out yourself, even if you feel that you can do it easily. It is good if your baby already knows how to blow his nose. In this case the problem can be solved easily. If he cannot, let your baby sniff some black pepper and wait for a big productive “achoo!” Did not help? Visit the ENT specialist;

- if your baby eats something he is not supposed to eat (including allergens):

In this case preventive measures are most effective. However, if such accident does happen, give your baby some Enterogel dissolved in the water, or any other adsorbent (according to age). It is also helpful to keep antihistaminic medicine at home as well. You never know which product, flower on the street or a neighbor’s hamster can cause allergy for your baby. Depending on the situation, if your baby swallows a dangerous substance or develops a fast reaction, swelling or experiences difficulty breathing, call an ambulance.

8. *Safety measures in the period of epidemic*. When your baby is ill (and his immunity is weak) and in times of epidemic in your city, do not take chances. Do not visit crowded places with the baby, especially if his nose is blocked, because in this situation it is easier to catch an infection.

My husband works in shifts, so when he was out of town at work for some weeks, during the flu epidemic, I had to be creative and do the shopping without going to the supermarkets. We were walking and buying groceries from the street stands, where you do not have to go inside. Also, we preferred walking in the park and going to friends and relatives, as opposed to going to cafes, shopping malls and playgrounds.

Furthermore, during the increase of incidence rate, regularly wash the baby's and your own nose with saline solution. Drink more water, eat garlic and products rich in vitamins.

If you get ill, wear a medical face mask at home and change it every two hours. Take into consideration the above mentioned things and get well soon!

9. *Read any popular book about pediatrics and first aid.* Nowadays bookstores and the Internet are full of books on this subject, written especially for parents. Having studied them, you will be able to recognize symptoms of different illnesses and take the first necessary steps to help your child before the doctor arrives. Start from the popular books by William and Martha Sears who raised eight children (“The Baby Book: Everything You Need to Know About Your Baby from Birth to Age Two”). Overall, when it comes to the baby's health, it is important to keep the balance between common sense, maternal intuition and knowledge. Before over-medicalizing your baby, have some valerian root and calm down. A baby is born with immunity and can handle fighting many infections, he\she just needs a little help. Yes, it might sound horrible to “not do anything” when your baby's body temperature is 37.5, but trust me, if you give antifebrile medicine, it will only lower the performance of the baby's own immune system. You can learn that from any knowledgeable pediatrician. Watch your child, listen to what your heart says, consider professionals' advice – and you will find the best solutions to support your baby's health.

Children have an amazing gift of feeling our mood and fears. If a baby is perfectly healthy but his mom is too worried and just “waits” when he\she gets ill, it will happen eventually, without a doubt.

All of us should stop reading many scary stories on the Internet, imagine what happens if our baby gets ill and simply panic. There will be snots, and not once. There will be high fever and diarrhea. As well as first nail trimming, first blood test and first appointment at the dentist. But in the end everything will be fine! Always remember that.

Chapter 5. Safety rules



*Children are such charming people. You cannot take your eyes off them.
And if you do – you have only yourself to blame.
Zaryana and Nina Nekrasov. “Stop raising children – help them grow up”*

I remember one episode since the time when I was pregnant. I was at the NST – with my beautiful belly tied with ribbons and decorated with sensors, reading a smart book about raising a child. So, I was laying there, trying to read, and my eyes were not on the book but on the fetal monitor tape. Here the line strangely went up, and now it is suspiciously quiet. I do not know anything

about non-stress tests, but there is something definitely wrong with my baby's heartbeat. I call for a nurse. She studies the tape and then looks at me... and says the words that I will remember forever: "Ok, mommy, when your baby is born, you will have many more reasons to worry. Will you panic like that always? Your NST is perfectly fine!"

Then, already after birth, I understood the main difference that occurs in a woman after she has had a baby. I am not talking about changing your bra from B cup to DD. And it is not about the fact that after birth mommies do not tend to converse about universal matters, preferring "we woke up" and "we pooped" instead. The most dramatic change is the fear that is now firmly settled in the brain of a delivered woman. Fear for her child, for baby's health and for herself as well.

Before birth I was rarely scared for my life. I could even call myself an adrenaline junkie. But then I became more of a "scaredy cat". It seemed now that it is more dangerous on the road than it was before, black ice became especially frightening, and the air – more dirty (so we definitely have to move outside of the city). I was an overeducated mother and already knew about SIDS and apnea, so at night every half hour I was rushing to the crib to see how my baby was breathing.

After about a year this paranoia started to abate. But I already accepted the fact that it will never go away fully.

I am not alone. Future mommies prepare to become an advanced parent with all their might, swallowing books about early child development and studying advice on how to raise a genius since birth. After birth they suddenly realize that all of this is not so important yet. It is much more important to protect their baby from all dangers of this world.

If you want to avoid many reasons to drink sedatives, it is better to take all necessary precautions and discuss them with the family (and better yet, write all safety rules down). When my husband and I started going out again, we started leaving Matvey with his grandmothers who did babysitting. We printed out an impressive list of household safety rules and put it on refrigerator. This way everyone felt more confident: us, new parents, and the baby's grandmothers who forgot things and anyway had an approach of "we-did-raise-you-somehow".

Let's divide all those rules into three relative categories according to baby's age (or simply speaking, according to the method which he uses to get around). Every next list is an addition to the previous one and includes new rules that take into account your baby's growing-up.

I. Until your baby learns to crawl

It seems like a newborn is not capable of anything yet. He\she will stay wherever you put him \her and is not able to do anything dangerous. However, everyday your little one develops new skills. There, he\she grabbed a rattle for the first time, rolled over to his tummy for the first time, and there you see he\she already rolled two meters away from where he\she was... I remember Matvey was four months old when my friend asked me: "So, did he\she fall off a bed already?" At that time, I thought: "How!? How is that possible to not look after your baby properly and let him fall off a bed?" Later I learned how. About six times.

– On the changing table

Never leave your baby unattended. Even if he\she did not learn how to roll over yet, your little one can move in unimaginable directions, just like a little caterpillar. Keep all baby care products so that your baby cannot reach them when lying on a changing table.

– In the bathroom

Check the water temperature with your elbow. The palms of our hands are much less sensitive. The ideal temperature is when your elbow does not feel cold or hot.

When bathing a baby support his head with the palm of your hand or put it on the crease of your elbow.

3. In the baby bed

Mattress in the baby bed should be enough hard and not easily sagged. Children do not need a pillow until 1,5—2 years old. Do not cover your baby with a blanket fully to the neck and on

top of the baby's hands. If you do, he can pull the blanket over his\her face. Either swaddle, or use a special baby sleeping bag.

If you put cushions around for a more comfortable sleep, make sure that they are not close to the baby's face and do not close the baby's nose. If you sleep next to your baby, make sure that it is safe. Do not use the same blanket and put a cushion between you and the baby.

4. *Around the baby*

There should not be any long ribbons and strings (on clothes, toys, pacifiers, etc.) in the vicinity. When you are holding a baby (or stay close to him\her), do not drink or eat anything too hot.

5. *In the car*

Doctors recommend to minimize the number of rides in a car with a baby until he can hold his head. If you have to, you can use a special collar for a baby to support the neck. Naturally, a child of any age must be put in a child safety seat. Yes, babies sometimes do not like to stay in the seat fastened, but safety is more important than silence.

To ensure safety in the car, it is important to buy a good safety seat and install it correctly as well.

Group 0 seats (so-called infant carriers) are installed only on the back seat of a car, perpendicular to the direction of the movement, head to door. Baby carriers hold the baby lying on the back.

Group 0+ seats are installed only in a rear-facing position, preferably on the back seat. If you put it on the front seat, make sure to turn the passenger airbag off.

Group 1 seats (for children who weigh 9—18 kg and can already sit properly) are forward-facing. Your baby is secured in the seat with a 5-point harness.

6. *When going for a walk*

In the summer avoid direct sunlight on the newborn's skin. When your baby grows up a little, do not forget about the baby sunhat and sunscreen.

II. When your baby already crawls

In the blink of an eye your baby will start getting around on his\her own. It seems like only yesterday he\she was laying on his tummy, and there he\she is, already crawled to the cupboard and is now playing with pots, spoons, pasta and other educational material.

If you do not want to impose restrictions or have many reasons to worry, simply make your home safe in advance. Before your little one starts exploring the surroundings, remove all electric cables and other dangerous things from the floor.

1. *Safe environment at home*

Get into the habit of closing the doors of all potentially dangerous spaces: balconies, pantry, closet with household cleaning products, etc. Put safety plugs into electrical sockets, hide away the cables, household chemicals and pharmaceuticals (better put them in an inaccessible lockable place). Put higher all sharp and breakable objects (such as vases, glass jars and bottles, household tools, etc.). Put away plastic bags and cords.

Let your sweet baby explore the environment without fear. Just make this world around him\her safer.

2. *Drawers and cabinets*

To ensure that your little one does not jam his fingers while playing with drawers and cabinet doors, put special stoppers on them. You could also temporarily remove handles from some drawers so that the baby could not open them. Drawers and cabinets with dangerous contents must be locked or emptied.

Instead of dangerous objects you can fill them with toys, plastic containers, etc. Packs with different grains make a great toy for a child. They are unusual to touch and rustle, making the baby happy. However, mom will not be so happy when a child learns how to open the pack and paints a creative picture with that buckwheat on the floor.

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