

Baby Basics



Baby Budget Cuts You Don't Want To Make

(NAPSA)—From diapers and day care to luxury strollers and irresistible pint-size fashions, a new baby can cost a bundle. Of course, there are ways to stretch your budget—and plenty of not-so-smart ways to save, too. In fact, put these cost-cutters on the no-no list, says Sandra Gordon, one of the nation's leading baby products experts and author of "Save a Bundle: 50+ Ways to Save Big on Baby Gear." "They can jeopardize your baby's health and safety, which should always be your top priority."

Risky Baby Savings

Buying a used car seat.

Although there are many baby items you can borrow or buy secondhand, don't make a car seat one of them if you can avoid it. A used seat may have been in a crash or recalled. The manufacturer's instructions may be missing. You'll need them to install the car seat properly, which is crucial for keeping your baby safe on the road.

Getting a great crib deal on the Internet. Sure, you can probably get a used crib for next to nothing from a secondhand seller. It may not meet the latest safety standards, however. Updated federal crib regulations stopped the manufacture and sale of drop-side cribs, made crib mattress supports stronger, the hardware more durable and safety testing more rigorous. To ensure your baby sleeps safely, buy a new crib, made after June 2011. By law, it must have stationary sides, with no moving parts that can potentially malfunction.

Selecting the cheapest crib mattress. Babies need the support of a firm mattress for their growing bones and to reduce the risks of



There are smart ways to save that are safe for your baby.

SIDS. Many parents just buy the lowest-priced crib mattress they can find, which tends to be mushy. Aim to spend around \$150 on this item, either foam or innerspring.

Stretching infant formula with extra water. Diluted formula won't meet your baby's nutritional needs and can cause water intoxication, which is potentially deadly. To safely save money, you can buy Store Brand Formulas, such as Walmart's Parent's Choice and Target's Up & Up, and prepare them exactly according to label directions. Store Brand Formulas offer the same complete nutrition as name-brand formulas and, according to a recent study, have been clinically proven to be as well tolerated. Store Brand Formulas cost up to 50 percent less than name-brand formulas, helping parents save hundreds of dollars a year.

Learn More

For more information, visit www.storebrandformula.com. For more baby safety tips, visit www.babyproductsmom.com.