

I was so excited to pick out my first diaper bag months before my son was due. H and I searched thoroughly for one sporty enough Daddy wouldn't mind toting it (lost that bet!) but would fit everything I thought I needed. When my little bundle arrived I finally got the content-part *just right* after months of trial and error with only a few moments of panic or almost busted seams. Here I share with you what made the cut and why (don't worry; it's an art, not a science). The list is long, but a lot of these items are small and fit in a small case like our [Diaper Bag Companion Kit](#).



The spray is nice because you can apply to a sensitive area without touching. Splurge on some cool kid Band-Aids; it'll be worth it.

The first time your child feels warm while you're running errands and you have to go all the way home to be sure it's not a fever you will wish you had an extra [thermometer](#)! It doesn't have to be fancy, just work. Fevers can come on suddenly and are not only scary for you but extremely uncomfortable for your child. I was so thankful to have a small bottle of [infant fever reducer](#) in my kit when my daycare called and my son had temperature of 104. By the time I arrived (45-minute drive) his fever was down to 100.

For the short time your little one is teething (at least it was for mine) you never know when that crazy shooting pain will have them melting down in the middle of your grocery run. [Teething swabs or pods](#) are great because you don't have to use your finger to apply it (esp. if it's not just been washed) and they don't leak in your bag (for some reason when I carried the ointment it always oozed out and made my bag smell).

Baby nails are SHARP! I cannot count the occasions I wished I had a set of [nail clippers](#) with me after getting scratched or realizing there was a hangnail or ingrown nail I wanted to clip before it caused problems.

Protect

I like to use a small lotion or [bar](#) for initial sunscreen application (esp. on the face) and a spray for re-applications. In the summer I always have the big spray can with me but even in the winter I keep something. Remember snow is reflective and can sunburn cheeks too.

If you know you're going somewhere you're bound to be swarmed (the woods), bring a large bottle of the natural, kid-safe [bug repellent](#). For a just-in-case solution try the wipes, stickers, or if your kiddo will keep it on the wristbands and you'll thank me for recommending them when you spot mosquitos at the family picnic.

Be Safe

An [Emergency Medical Information Card](#) and your medical insurance cards (for yourself and your children) should also be with you at all times. The card should list allergies, medical conditions, and your primary physicians' contact info. It could save your life in an emergency if you are unable to speak it. If you ever need to schedule an appointment or call to ask the doctor a question having the numbers handy is priceless (program it in your phone, too).

My set of [Oliver's Labels](#) included disposable waterproof wristbands. I keep one in my bag and whenever we go somewhere crowded (airshow, theme park) I write my cell on one and attach it to him. I like to think my child will never wander away from me but it can't hurt to take precautions. Older kids might like a custom dog tag instead (H's girls' Dad bought them some and they come in all kinds of designs).

An [Emergency Contact & HIPAA release](#) card should be with you at all times with the phone number of at least one person who can meet you at a hospital. Better is to include the names of all the people you want to be able to receive information. I have heard horror stories of folks getting in car accidents and when a close friend or family member realized they were missing hospitals could not confirm they were a patient due to HIPAA restrictions.

[Antiseptic spray](#) or [antibiotic ointment](#) is super to have on-hand; especially if you have a squirmy kiddo and no good way to really clean out a scrape while you're out.

You can choose to (like I did) get a cloth washable [cart cover](#) and keep it in your car or use cheap, disposable high chair covers. Of course you can always also just use wipes to clean off any surface your child will try to mouth (everything); including the edges of the table and any straps/buckles.

When my little one transitioned out of the carrier he was able to sit in the cart but would lose his balance. The big bouncy balls most department stores and many grocery stores sell were the perfect 'spacers'. I would go get two and put one on either side of him right away, then put them back right before we checked out. You could also bring your own stuffed animals or blankets for this. Since you're typically putting the kiddo in the cart at the car it's not that difficult to just keep these stashed there (more on things to stash in the car later).

Stay Clean

Sometimes you just need the regular old dry tissues often it's for YOU! When the boogers get crusty Boogie Wipes are a lifesaver. With a runny infant nose a good [nasal aspirator](#) (aka booger sucker) is critical if you don't want to be wiping every 25-seconds.

It's great to have a [stain remover](#) stick, travel size spray, or wipes so there's at least a chance of saving that cute outfit you splurged on and immediately got strawberry juice dripped all over it (yours or theirs).

Finally, the Actual Diapers

You'll need less diapers as they get older but keep enough in your bag for surprises. If you always stock it up to about 10 you're more likely to still have some if you are ever in a rush and don't check before leaving.

Your friends will thank-you (or at least not secretly be disgusted) when you have to change a diaper at their house and put it in a [deodorized bag](#) before leaving it in their trash. Even wet diapers smell awful after a day or so. You will also thank [yourself](#) for these if you ever have to do a change in the car. Otherwise you risk noxious fumes until you find a trash can (blowouts happen and waiting could mean serious diaper rash the rest of the trip). Even if you have a trash can close, who wants to carry a poopy diaper there in their hand?

A [changing pad](#) doesn't need to be too big; just enough to get under baby's head and tush. If you buy a standard diaper bag they almost all come with one so don't go out and buy one separately. After a while I stopped carrying the pad and just stuffed a couple puppy pads in the bag instead. These covered more area and were perfect when changing a diaper on a

friend's bed, couch, or carpet (I actually put these on my diaper changing table pad at home until we transitioned to solid food).

I broke down long ago and started buying wipes in the

Take note of changing facilities (or lack there-of) in your regular shopping favorites. Typically big box and grocery stores have tables but don't assume. Some baby stores also have nursing rooms. I would often drive a little out of the way to run errands near our Babies-R-U's while nursing just so I could plan to stop there at feeding time.

to-go packs. I know the refill packs are cheaper and I buy them for all other purposes but struggling with a poopy infant and wipes that wouldn't dispense easily was just too much for me. I never did find a re-usable diaper-bag-size container that wasn't a pain.

YES, you need both diaper cream AND ointment. Ointment is a preventative; cream is for healing. That being said, my son was very sensitive and if he had a rash I alternated between cream and ointment as the cream (strong stuff) would sometimes make his skin raw by drying him out. If you only have room for one, bring ointment, and stick to tubes under 3-oz so you don't get caught without anything after TSA makes you throw away your 6-oz tube.



Clothing

Keep an extra outfit that's one size too large because it could live in the bag for two days or two months. It's not just for accidents... toddlers are messy, and sometimes you just don't want the other people in line to think you let your child run around in clothes covered in crusty food and boogers all the time.

A [dry-bag](#)/ziplock bag is crucial if you want to save that \$70 Juicy couture outfit despite the blowout. You're gonna need something to put it in and not contaminate the entire contents of your bag (or smelling it in your car on the way home). Of course you could use my solution which was not to buy anything I would regret having to throw away. There were a few days I just got rid of all evidence!

Nourish

I loved the Tommee Tippee bottles that came with nesting [formula dispensers](#). I'd fill the pockets of my bag with those when we'd go out of a day of errands. When my son was still on breastmilk I would bring one frozen bag in a [cooler pouch](#), but found often I was not in a place where I could easily defrost it. You're up a creek without some formula. With a toddler a sippy cup and a juice pack to squeeze into it is always on me.

With an infant I always had a little rice cereal or other powdered baby food in a snap-lock container with a lid. Even moving up to finger foods, when we'd go out it was great to have something that needed no refrigeration and I could just mix a little water in which was available everywhere.

What to Stash in Your Car

Towel (who wants to sit in a poopy seat to go home)
Clorox wipes
Reusable cloth bags
Toys that stay in the car
Extra/disposable bottle or sippy cup
Snacks

Fruit squeeze packs are great because they are compact, don't need refrigeration, and they come in all sorts of organic varieties. My son loved them and they definitely headed off a few meltdowns. If you are able to keep them cold you can try these [refillable ones](#) which I have and that work great. String cheese is also a healthy and filling (fat is good!) snack but has to stay cool. If I know I'll be out awhile I freeze a juice pack and stick the cheese and maybe some turkey or ham pieces in the cooler pouch with it.

Rice puffs are great for new solid eaters (6-12 months). Dried fruit, granola, cereal, peanut-butter crackers are great snacks for toddlers. I usually would buy the big box and put them in a snap-lock container with a lid. Although it's a bit more prep (buy a bunch and fill ahead) it's cheaper, you have more control over variety, and you don't end up with crumbs instead of crackers. Oh yeah, and don't forget something for YOU (my favorites are Somersaults).

A spoon is critical when you switch to solids! Not only for eating food *you* brought but when you realize the restaurant spoons are way too big for your kiddos' bites. Also, unless you want to bring extra shirts, bring bibs. I like these super neat [bib clips](#) that turn a cloth napkin or burp cloth into a bib. Receiving blankets or burp cloths for an infant are obvious, but we all know

they can be used for so much more! You will have spills, you will have throw-up... it's inevitable. Boy is it nice to have something to soak it up or wipe it off.

Bottled water is a must, for both of you. I often carry a [filter bottle](#) with me, either in the car or in my bag. I love having it for air travel because my son can drink out of it with minimal spills and I can use the water fountain instead of buying \$5 bottles of water all the way. Be sure to get one with a mouthpiece that seals because otherwise the change in pressure will make it leak all over your bag.

Entertain

A [cloth book](#) is quiet when smacked on just about anything, and avoids soggy cardboard or foam being swallowed, plus it's smoochable and washable! Don't forget the extra pacifier if that's your fancy (or rather, theirs). Probably best to keep it in a case.

Say what you will... I love my [Kindle Fire](#) with kid-proof case and it's always with me on long trips. In D.C. the traffic gets bonkers and being distracted by a hungry whining 2-year-old is likely to turn my car into another obstacle. Before I started resorting to this I had been known to sing Old McDonald for 30-minutes straight on my drive home (run out of the typical animals quicker than you think). It's small, light, and is so versatile it's definitely worth the splurge. There are also tons of apps for toddlers and up (educational, too).

Organize (How do I fit all this in one bag?!)

I liked [my bag](#) because it required less digging, I could see what was in the mesh pockets, had places to clip things to it, a stroller strap, a cooler pocket (removable good for wiping out), and was washable.

If you have others who care for your child or foresee having to verbally direct people to find things in the pockets (grandma!) a great help is to [label the pockets](#) or zippers. Otherwise they will dig through all the pockets, get frustrated, move things around, and you'll never find anything.

Keep liquid and gel items separate in a toiletry case with an address tag and clear sides for TSA (like the one in our [Diaper Bag Companion Kit](#)).

This article is part of a series designed to help busy families with small children in both the Sippy-cup world and beyond. Check out <http://www.beyondthesippycup.com> for more or our [Amazon Store](#) for all these items in one place!