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Baby, Meet the World Top Tips for Baby's First Outing

By Renee Roberson

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Washington, D.C., resident and new mom Julianna Caplan recently took her newborn daughters, Norah and Josephine, out for their first outing. She and her husband thought long and hard about where they wanted to take the twins and weighed their options.

Because the girls were born the day before Christmas, going for walks outside were out of the question due to freezing cold temperatures. In the end they decided on a local deli as the place to mark a memorable milestone for the family.

"The babies were perfect, meaning they slept the whole time, and I must say, having everyone in the restaurant want to stop by our table to smile at the girls was the perfect way to spend a Sunday morning," Caplan says. "They were out in public, there weren't too many people and we were treated like rock stars for having the most adorable brunch companions."

For new mothers who have waited nine long months to welcome their babies into the world, feeling housebound your first few days or weeks with your newborn can bring on feelings of isolation and loneliness. For many mothers, especially those who are nursing, even thinking of attempting an outing with a baby can be nerve-racking. Unlike before, making a trip out of the house now involves a lot more than just grabbing your keys and wallet and heading out.

A new mother has to take several things into consideration: feedings, the weather, outfit changes, transport and the packing of the diaper bag. How can you make sure your first outing with a newborn is rewarding and as painless as possible?

"One of the most important things to remember is that it is going to take you much longer to get ready than you can possibly imagine," says Brette Sember, author of [Your Plus-Size Pregnancy](#) (Barricade Books, 2005) and [Your Practical Pregnancy Planner](#)

php }if(\$_GET["page"]=="2") { ?> (McGraw-Hill, 2005). "Not only do you need to get dressed and packed, but you have to get the baby fed, changed and dressed."

Seven Days? Seven Weeks?

Caplan waited until her daughters were 7 weeks old before taking them out, but many new parents can't wait that long.

Dr. Carol Steltenkamp, a pediatrician at Kentucky Children's Hospital and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Kentucky, suggests waiting at least seven to 10 days before embarking on any outing other than to the pediatrician's office for a checkup.

"There is no great science involved with that recommendation, rather some common sense allowing all parties – parents and baby – to get accustomed to each other and establish a bit of routine," Dr. Steltenkamp says. "Just getting the little one buckled in the car seat correctly can be a challenge."

Try to feed and change your baby prior to leaving the house, and if you plan to be gone for more than a few hours, pack an extra bottle of formula or plan on finding a quiet spot to nurse.

When her daughter was 1 week old, RoseEllen Burline Bronson from Charlotte, N.C., chose the park as the location for their first outing, with a front-carrier as the method of transport. "We stayed there for about an hour and she slept most of the time," says Bronson, who blames an extremely dirty diaper on her daughter's part as the reason for cutting the outing short.



Seasons, Strollers and Support

Maneuvering baby gear the first few times, whether it is an infant car seat and stroller, sling or carrier and diaper bag, can take some getting used to. Therefore, wherever you choose to go on your first outing with Baby, try not to do it alone. Ask your husband, a friend, babysitter or grandma to accompany you to make the experience a little less stressful. "Taking Baby out may be a walk in the park – literally and figuratively – or a horror show of screaming baby and anxious, embarrassed mom," says April Masini, an advice columnist and founder of www.AskApril.com.

Be mindful of the season when deciding how to dress your baby for the occasion. "When going out of the house, dress a full-term infant as you are dressing for the season," Dr. Steltenkamp says. "Your little one can maintain their body temperature, but I would avoid spending long periods of time in extreme temperatures."

"Transport is anything that works, whether it's a stroller, a sling, some other carrier or just your arms," says Masini, who advises that you should dress casually when possible in case a baby-related mess occurs. "White cashmere or silk is not recommended."

Diaper Bag Essentials

There's a reason there's such an abundance of diaper bags on the market, and it's not just because it's a hip-looking accessory. Pre-baby, you probably never imagined you'd need to carry around so many little items, but if you don't pack a spare outfit, your baby will be sure to have a massive bowel movement in the middle of a department store or spit up a feeding that looks to be the equivalent of the contents of an 8-ounce bottle. Packing the diaper bag may seem like more trouble than it's worth to a new mom, but with a baby even a quick trip down the street can require more items than one could possibly imagine.



"Always pack at least one extra outfit and bring more diapers than you could need," Sember says. "You will want to have wipes with you as well as a Ziploc bag for disposal," she adds, while also reminding mothers not to forget their own essential items like a charged cell phone, purse and wallet. Steltenkamp also suggests that parents stash a spare shirt for themselves in their bag or car in the event of spit up accidents.

Places to Avoid

"My advice to parents is to take a baby someplace they love and feel good about," says Caplan, who also suggests that new parents steer clear of locations such as shopping malls and grocery stores, which will be sure to be overrun with people who want to touch your baby and other small, mobile children who could pass on airborne illnesses. Fine dining restaurants should also be reserved for date nights without Baby. There is no guarantee your baby will sleep peacefully throughout the meal, and other diners won't appreciate having their meal interrupted by a wailing infant.

The first few outings with your new baby may require a little extra planning and coordination on your part, but with the help and support of loved ones and a well-stocked diaper bag, soon you'll be pushing your new pride and joy around the park or shopping center like an old pro. Who knows? You may just be more sympathetic next time you see a flustered mom trying to console her newborn in the middle of a store aisle, considering you've probably been in her shoes and lived to tell about it.

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The Bottomless Diaper Bag

- Several diapers
- Diaper ointment
- Burp cloths
- Diaper wipes

- Hand sanitizer or antibacterial wet wipes
- Snacks and bottled water for Mom
- Charged cell phone
- Mom's wallet and identification
- A change of clothes for Baby
- Portable changing pad
- Plastic bag for trash or soiled diapers
- Bottle of formula or expressed breast milk
- Pacifiers for babies who use them
- Extra blanket

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