

Save money: how to penny pinch without hurting your young child

☒ When it comes to our children, we want the best that money can buy. But the best is not necessarily the most expensive. Today we offer our pediatrician perspective on ways you can save money without compromising your child's health or safety.

Buy generic infant formula: Common store brands of iron-containing Food and Drug Administration regulated infant formulas cost less than big name brands and have equal nutritional value.

Do not buy toddler formula. This is a marketing coup. Children over one year of age can drink milk.

No need to buy only organic milk and food. Read here for more information about organic vs conventional foods.

Make your own baby food- from the start you can grind up part of your breakfast, lunch or dinner in a blender for your baby. Grind up cooked chicken or cooked vegetables, pasta or soft fruits, mix with a little formula or breast milk if you need to get the pureed consistency just right, and commence spoon feeding! You will save tons of money from not buying bad-for-the-environment plastic containers of baby food. When your babies advance to finger foods, [simply cut up pieces of your foods](#).

Do NOT spend money on "toddler junk food" such as Puffs for portable finger food practice. Instead buy "toasted oats" (brand name = Cheerios) which are low in sugar, contain iron, and are much less expensive. **One exception: do buy the baby**

cereals (rice, oatmeal, barley, or mixed grains) because they contain more iron than “grown-up” oatmeal and babies need the extra iron for their development.

Buy generic medicine: acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol), ibuprofen (brand name Motrin, Advil), diphenhydramine (brand name Benadryl), loratadine (Claritin), ceterizine (Zyrtec). If your child’s doctor prescribes amoxicillin (for ear infection, Strep throat, sinusitis), ask the pharmacist how much the medication would cost if you paid cash. The cost for this commonly prescribed antibiotic may be less than your insurance co-pay.

Accept hand-me-down clothes, shoes, etc. The **purpose of shoes is to protect feet**. Contrary to what the shoe sales-people tell you, cheap shoes or already-worn shoes will protect feet just as well as expensive, new ones. Just make sure they fit properly.

Don’t buy “sleep positioners” for the crib. Place your newborn to sleep on his back and he will not/cannot roll over. If you need to elevate your baby’s upper body to prevent spit-up or to provide comfort from gas, don’t buy a “wedge” but instead put a book under each of the 2 crib legs so the entire head of the crib is elevated. There is NO evidence that wedges or sleep positioners prevent SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and these products are NOT endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Kardos advises her patients to return any sleep positioners that they received at the baby shower and use the money for diapers instead.

The best toys are ones that can be reconfigured and used again and again. Legos, blocks, crayons/markers/chalk, small cars, dolls, balls come to mind. Avoid one-time only assembly type items, breakables, etc. Have a “toy recycle” party or a pre-Halloween costume recycle party: everyone brings an old costume/toy they would like to trade and everyone leaves with a “new” item (kids don’t care if things are brand new or not, they care only if you teach them to care). Along the same

lines, inexpensive paint can turn a pink “girl’s bike” into her younger brother’s blue “boy bike.” [Read our article on gift ideas for kids](#) for more ideas that do not “break the bank.”

Borrow books from libraries instead of buying them new or look for previously owned ones at yard sales, thrift shops and online.

Don’t buy “Sippy cups.” Teach your child to drink out of regular open cups. Sippy cups are for parents who don’t like mess-[they are not a developmental stage](#). They are actually bad for teeth when they contain juice or milk and they do not aid in child development. They can also cause harm to children who run and fall while drinking out of them.

Skip over potty training pants. Go straight to underwear.

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