Mom's Moment: New Baby It List

Written by Nadine Bubeck

I'm embarking on my third. Truly, can't believe I'll have three kids under four. Don't know how moms of three little ones do it- we only have two hands! But I suppose we just make it work, right?

I'm admittedly a hoarder when it comes to baby stuff, toddler gear and toys. I love exploring what's out there- especially the new, innovative, practical, stimulating, educational, and entertaining stuff. But now that I've been around the block (twice), I know needs versus wants; essentials versus splurges. And so, a round up of finds covering the whole spectrum for moms seeking an out-of-the-box "it list."

First, the basics: a car seat and stroller. There are SO many boutique brands and offerings, but all my kids have utilized Chicco car seats, as the company is constantly rated #1 in safety. Chicco recently debuted its Fit2, an A+ car seat that's both fashionable and functional. The Fit2 is a first-of-its-kind rear-facing car seat designed with two unique positions to accommodate infants and toddlers, making it easy to remain rear-facing for the first two years. Flaunting a sleek gender-neutral look, this posh seat showcases a 7-position headrest and padded harness to accommodate early growth stages. Pair the Fit2 with the BravoFor2, a two-passenger stroller designed for expanding families. This stroller features a padded stroller seat with a five-point harness, large adjustable canopy, and removable tray with cup holders. In addition, the BravoFor2 is outfitted with a bonus back seat and platform where big kids can either ride or stand.

As parents, worry is something that's second nature. We can't help it. In fact, I think I'll never have a solid good night sleep again because there's always something to be concerned about. I'm admittedly an OCD mom. I follow the rules. Even at 2 ½ years old, I take away my toddler's pillow after he falls asleep, and both my boys still sleep with lightweight blankets. While my current tendencies might be viewed as extreme, there is a deep worry among parents of newborns when it comes to SIDS. I hate getting grim, but it's a reality, and I used to lay awake watching my babies breathe rather than sleep. …Enter Owlet. The Smart Sock 2 uses proven technology (pulse oximetry) to track your infant's heart rate and oxygen levels during their sweet slumber. It has a range up to 100 feet and uses an innovative fabric sock to ensure a comfortable fit and accurate readings. In a nutshell, this awesome concoction notifies you if your baby's heart rate or oxygen levels become abnormal. I strongly believe in anything that gives parents peace of mind, in addition to providing legitimate safety precautions.

Next, it's hard to choose from the many bottles gracing shelves at baby stores- truth is, how to choose? After trial and error with my first two, I'm keeping things simple with #3. I don't want to constantly wash five separate parts, instead, I'm opting for something simple and sleek: Olababy Bottles. Designed with creating the best experience for babies, these "GentleBottles" keeps feeding as natural as it should be while stimulating development through touch and sight. Made of soft medical grade silicone (100% toxin free), the soft texture and shape allows baby and parents a safe and comfortable grip. The off-set nipple design mimics a natural breast that allows for easy latching and reduces bottle rejection. And the best part- few parts! There's a wide neck allowing for easy cleaning. BPA, PVC, and Phthalate free.

After much experience with boogers, I've realized the importance of investing in good wellness products for baby, and for that, I turn to Fridababy. The company recently debuted its BIG Bundle of Joy kit stocked with healthcare essentials. For $99, you'll get a NoseFrida, Fridet, FeverFrida iThermometer, NailFrida, S-Shaped Nail File, 10 Windi Gasspassers, 15 adhesive patches and a handy travel bag to store everything in on-the-go. Yes, it's nearly a hundred bucks, but yes, it is money well spent. You'll use this stuff ALL THE TIME, plus, it's convenient to transport in a diaper bag.

Speaking of mommy maintenance, get ready to do lots of laundry. Tons. Like a few loads a day. I'm a firm believer in specialized detergent- in fact, I still use baby-safe detergent for all our washes. Dreft recently launched Dreft purtouch - a 65% plant-based baby detergent that is hypoallergenic and made with naturally-derived ingredients to be gentle on baby's skin. The unique formula is free of dyes, chlorine, phosphates, ethanolamine and optical brighteners - specially formulated to effectively and gently clean baby's clothes. Baby's skin is so sensitive- why not launder their clothes with the most natural detergent available?

Next, a little something special to baby, love dad. I'm all about the Nintendo line from Bumkins…and so is my hubby. Bumkins is a super practical company that sells reusable, durable and washable snack bags, wet bags, bibs, feeding and teething gear and their stuff is simply adorable. Since my husband is all about Mario, I've succumbed to boy-mom-hood and stocked our shelves with the Nintendo offerings. The Gameboy baby teether is super cute (in a geeky sorta way), as are the other video game-inspired offerings. The company also has stuff to grow with your child, like mealtime sets and splat mats.

When it comes to baby gear, you'll want a pack-n-play. Why? Because you'll use it. You'll use it for sleeping. For playing. For travel. For a trip to grandma's. But seriously, don't over invest in a crazy expensive set-up with bells and whistles you won't use (I promise!). I like the Safety 1st Prelude Play Yard. This three-way convertible play yard is a cozy bassinet, a convenient changing table, and a roomy play yard all in one. The bassinet is spacious and comfortable, while the changing table offers added convenience with an allotted area for diapering necessities. When your little one is ready, it converts into a full-sized play yard with plenty of room for favorite toys. Best part? It looks good and it's under $120.

To swaddle your sweetheart, you'll want something soft, cozy, lightweight and safe, and for that, I like Lifestyle Bamboo. These modern muslin swaddlers are silky and cozier than cotton and cotton blend swaddles. Made with 100% Bamboo Rayon, they get softer after each wash, and can be used as a blanket, tummy time play mat, nursing cover, portable crib sheet and more. Chic gender neutral designs available.

No matter your first, second, third, etc, there's nothing like initiating the start of tummy time. I loved getting on the ground with my boys- witnessing them naturally work their muscles and lift their head; it's such a special developmental process. For a great tummy time experience, I prefer the high quality (and affordable!) Playgro 3-in-1 Safari Gym. It's generously stimulating with bright colors and toys, and easily transforms from play mat to crib mobile to crib toy (hence, the 3-in-1!). For less than $30, this mat will become your baby's BFF.

No suprise, I'm all about spying on my sleeping baby, and I recently came across the Totokan baby monitor line, redefining the next-generation of baby monitors. Yes, they just launched their Kickstarter, but I'm truly infatuated with this on-the-go concoction. The Totokan has over four hours of battery life and offers a simple two minute setup that allows you to connect your smartphone/tablet to the monitor via Cloud. A unique app allows parents to monitor their children virtually anywhere in the world. It's portable, water-resistant and can be moved around the house, at a friend's house, or wherever a baby decides to fall asleep in. The flexibility in user scenarios is specifically designed to be geared towards busy parents who would like to check in on their children throughout the day.

Next, had to highlight a few cool toys. After going through two rounds of babies, we've sifted through the what's hot-and-what's not when it comes to baby play.

I'm a big fan of Manhattan Toys; simple, good quality, affordable and stimulating. Baby will love the following:

The Look Who's Smiling Photo Book is an excellent "gift" from an older sibling. It features clacking rings, crinkling crinkle paper and other tantalizing textures that turn an ordinary photo album into a playful book of memories. The terry cloth photo album is the ultimate keepsake toy, storing up to 5 4x6 photos. Kids always love looking at themselves, so this is a safe, smart way to provide them with such eye candy!

The Wimmer-Ferguson See & Say Book goes back to the black and white basics perfect for youthful stimulation. The high contrast images and easy to read letters make this book great for babies practicing image recognition and beginner reading skills. The board book consists of 10 pages and is aimed for babies 6+ months.

Manhattan Toy's Classic Skwish is an award-winning toy that fascinates babies with its twisted web of rods, strings, and beads. Made from renewable rubberwood, this glorified baby rattle is great for crib play or car seat play. Available in natural or an array of colors, there's no doubt this simplified toy will bring much joy to your playful pal.

I'm all about special stuffed animals, but not into overly colorful plush pals with pieces that are questionably unsafe. That's why I love the Large Luxe Ivy Bear, made of luscious, luxurious soft fabric. It's snow white and adorable. An excellent accent to a rocking chair or friend for playing.

And this is one thing I never got for my first two- a water mat. However, it's a cool concept and really engaging. The Manhattan Toy Whoozit Water Mat is an eye-catching tummy time surface that makes stretching a lot more interesting. Easy to fill, it features floating foam pieces that move when baby touches the mat for cause and effect learning. Plus, it encourages your child to watch and touch, while developing fine motor skills.

And finally, for cute, simply colorful toys, I like Yookidoo's lights n' music fun ball and tap n' play balloon. The fun ball is simplicity at it's finest, while ensuring endless play for growing babies. Designed for tiny hands, the ball lights up and plays music to touch, in addition to featuring multiple soft textures. Plus, you can attach it to a stroller or crib. And the tap n' play balloon is adorable, introducing children to cause and effect processes in addition to helping them develop auditory skills. The plush hot air balloon plays music and rattles.

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