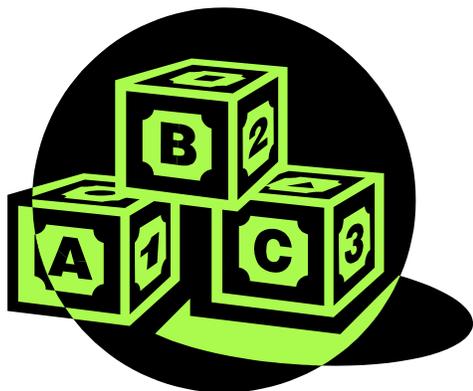


Planning for Baby – Clothing Fabric Choices, Care Labels, Comfort, Fit, Size, and Safety

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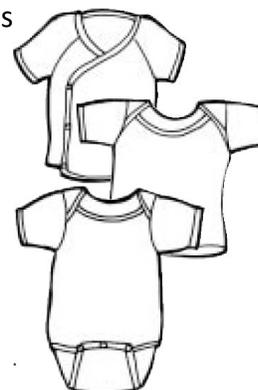


Often the most enjoyable activity while waiting for baby is purchasing clothes. It is important to keep a couple of things in mind when making purchases. The most important one is to provide your baby with comfort! The second is that babies grow fast. This fact sheet will help you understand comfort and safety, choose fabrics, and read labels.

The most impractical items are often the most tempting to buy. However, it doesn't matter if the clothing is pink or blue, new or old, as long as the baby feels comfortable and secure. Clothing purchase decisions need to be based on your family's needs, income, lifestyle, and available time.

Fabrics

- Lightweight fabrics are best but not all fabrics are the same. A fabric should “breathe” so body moisture can evaporate, especially in the summer months.
- Cotton and cotton blends are often the best choices. Cotton washes well and is durable, which is necessary for babies. Stains are more easily removed from cotton items and they can be washed at higher temperatures.
- A good choice in cotton is cotton knits. They retain their shape well, do not need ironing, and generally do not shrink.
- There are a few woven fabrics that can work well. Other fabric types such as terry, napped, and plain textures are available in a variety of fibers. Terry fabrics often are knits but may also be a woven fabric that is similar to towels used in your bathroom. Terry fabrics for babies are often cotton and nylon blends. These fabrics are soft, breathe well and are comfortable. Napped fabrics include terrycloth and fleece. Plain textures often feel like a soft cotton t-shirt. All these different textures and types of fabrics work well.



Care Labels

- It is important to check the fabric care labels when buying baby items. These labels will tell you at what temperature to wash and dry the item. (See Table 1. Fabric Care Symbols on page 5.) Your baby's clothes should be able to withstand washing in hot water and drying at hot levels. Clothing and other fabric items will also have labels telling you the fabric content (cotton, nylon, linen, etc.) of the item.
- If your baby's clothes need to be bleached, check to see if you can use chlorine bleach or if you can only use non-chlorine, color-safe bleach.
- Check to see if the clothing has to be washed on a specific cycle.
- **Do not choose clothing that has to hand-washed or washed on the delicate/gentle cycle.** These will not clean as well, they will not stand up for long periods of time, and they will cost you more money over time.
- Avoid clothing that needs to be ironed.
- If you want to use fabric softeners on any of your baby's garments, bedding, or towels, use only dryer-sheet softeners.
- Rinse-cycle softeners reduce the ability of your baby's garments, bedding, or towels to absorb water and let air flow easily.

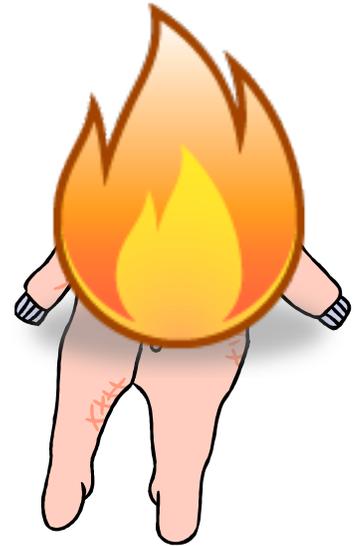


Comfort

- Garments should have a minimal number of seams. These seams should not be bulky.
- Garment edges should be well finished to eliminate irritation. If garments have collars, they should be small and lay flat.
- Sleepwear should not be bulky or irritating. Sleepwear with feet should provide plenty of room for the feet to move. The feet should not feel restricted within the garment.

Fit

- Fit is as important as the fabric used. Snug-fitting sleepwear does not ignite easily and, even if ignited, does not burn readily because there is little oxygen to feed a fire; so flame resistant fabric is not an absolute necessity for infants.
- Neck openings should be large and easy to manipulate.
- The bottom should have easy access to diapers. You should not have to take the whole garment off baby to change a diaper.



Size

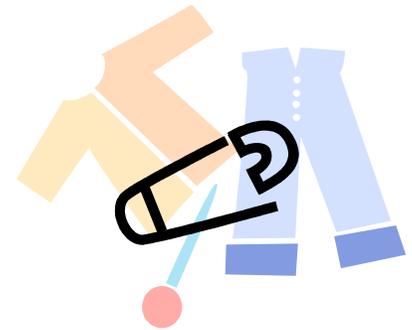
- Sizes vary by brand.
- Manufacturers may provide a weight and height chart on the label or size may be labeled by age. Make sure you carefully look at the clothing and not just the size on the label.
- When buying clothes for a newborn infant, consider purchasing sizes in the 3- to 6-month range since babies grow quickly. If you do have items in the newborn size, it may pay not to open the packages until you know your baby's weight and length. Many newborns are too large for the newborn size.

Safety: flame-resistant sleepwear

- Recently, the law has removed the requirement that infant sleepwear be flame resistant. As a result, it is important that the garments fit well. As your child gets older and can reach sources that could ignite the garment, the federal law requires these garments be flame resistant. It is very important that you read the labels carefully.
- There is no standard flame resistance label; they vary, depending on the manufacturer. Flame-resistant or flame-retardant fabrics can resist catching fire, burn slowly when in contact with the

flame source, and may self-extinguish or be easily extinguished by smothering the flame. Flame-resistant and flame-retardant have the same definition when used on clothing labels.

- Clothes are made with flame-resistant or flame-retardant properties by adding a chemical finish to the fabric. Or, chemicals may be added to the fibers. Garment labels will read “chemical-free” if the flame resistant chemical has been added to fibers instead of the fabric. The fabrics usually found in this category are vinyon, modacrylic, and polyester.



- Tests show garments with chemicals added to the fibers versus the garments with chemicals added to the fabric are equally flame resistant. Keep in mind the garments with chemicals added to the fibers and not the actual fabric do not have the extra chemical treatment needed to pass the children’s sleepwear flammability standard.
- Most manufacturers use hangtags on their snug-fitting sleepwear to let consumers know that the product meets federal safety standards. The hangtags help parents know a snug fit or flame resistance is necessary for safety.
- Children should never sleep in T-shirts, sweats, or other oversized, loose-fitting cotton or cotton-blend garments. These garments catch fire easily and are associated with 200 to 300 emergency room-treated burn injuries annually to children. (For more details, see the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission web site on baby sleepwear, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/slpwear.html>.)
- Rinse-cycle softeners increase the flammability of both cotton and polyester fabrics. Dryer sheets do not affect the flammability of these fabrics.

Please note: The rules for flame resistance or snug fit do not apply to sleepwear for sizes 9 months and under because infants that wear these sizes are insufficiently mobile to expose themselves to an open flame.

References

- Jones, Sandy (2001). Consumer Reports Guide to Baby Products. Yonkers, N.Y.: Consumer Reports Special Publications.
- Consumer Product Safety Commission, <http://www.cpsc.gov/>

Remember, these are the basic guidelines to get you started. As you become more comfortable and have a set routine, you will have a better idea of exactly what you will need and not need.

This one of a set of fact sheets called *Planning for Baby*. You may also want to see the series *Children and Family Finances*.

This fact sheet was revised from *Planning for Baby – Consumer Issues* by Hayhoe, C., Jamison, S. Dillard, A. F., and Chase, M.

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Symbol	Suitable for Baby?		
	Machine Wash	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Machine Wash Gentle Cycle	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Hand Wash	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do not Wash	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Wash, Permanent Press	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Bleach When Needed	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Bleach with Non-chlorine bleach	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Do not Bleach	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tumble Dry	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Do not Tumble Dry	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Line Dry	Avoid unless you live in a climate that makes this an option and you have access to clothes lines	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Do Not Iron	Okay	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Dry Clean	Avoid	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 1. Fabric Care Symbols