

Clean Smarter

Whether the desire to nest strikes days or weeks away from your due date, use this guide to get the work done.



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YOU

ORGANIZING



Freshen up where your mom (um, Grammy!) will sleep.

● Big-Picture To-Dos

Give your house a “safety exam”

Having a baby at home who can crawl into the kitchen and open cabinets full of toxic chemicals may seem like a lifetime away, but any parent will tell you it’s certainly not. Babies become mobile practically overnight, and it’s easier to prepare now than when you’re sleep-deprived later. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, cleaning products (including laundry and dishwasher pods) and medication should always be stored out of sight and out of reach in securely locked cabinets. Use magnetic locks on cabinets not out of reach, says Darla DeMorrow, a certified professional organizer and owner of HeartWork Organizing:

“They work well on nearly every type, are easy to install, and don’t pinch your fingers.”

If you have firearms in your home, remove any ammunition and lock it away in a separate place from the gun. Store those keys in a different area from where you keep your household keys. Last but not least, check or install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

Prep for visitors It’s worth spending a bit of time now gathering what

Green the nursery to clean the air. English ivy, peace lily, and bamboo palm best filter out pollutants, NASA scientists report.

MANAGE THE DAILY DIRT

As you will soon learn, an organized home can quickly turn into a disaster site once Baby arrives. We’ve got solutions for the problems that set you back most.

FOR SPILLS

Ditch paper towels in favor of microfiber cleaning cloths, which are reusable, incredibly absorbent, and quick-drying.

FOR CLUTTER

Keep a basket on your bottom stair and toss in items that need to go up when you have a moment. As much as you can, avoid toting your baby up and down stairs with other things. A 2012 study found that about 25 percent of injuries among babies under age 1 occurred when they were being carried up or down staircases.

FOR DISHES

Strap your baby into a bouncy seat nearby while you load and unload the dishwasher. Or wear her in a carrier—some infants prefer motion, so she may find this chore soothing.

FOR YOUR “HELPER”

If you have an older child, keep a spray bottle on hand for him filled with water or a mild soap-and-water combo. He can clean next to you and feel useful instead of left out.

If you're painting the nursery, it's wise to clean the walls first for a smooth finish.

overnight guests, like your mother or your best friend, will need when they stay, says Laura Dellutri, author of *Speed Cleaning 101*. This way, you won't be racing around searching for sheets or towels the moment you're home from the hospital. Stock up on toothpaste, toothbrushes, and toilet paper. Change the sheets, make sure the night-light works, and put an extra fan in the room for white noise.

Target the red zones The germiest areas aren't light switches and doorknobs, as you might suspect, but kitchen sinks, dish rags, sponges, faucet handles, countertops, stove knobs, refrigerator handles, cutting boards, and toothbrush holders, reveals research from the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF) International. To bring Baby home to spic-and-span digs, have your partner give everything a once-over when you're recovering in the hospital. Going forward, stash sanitizing wipes near hot spots so you can wipe them down on a regular basis, suggests Jennifer Theons, who owns a Merry Maid franchise in Lakewood, New Jersey.

● Kitchen Musts

Reimagine your space Look at your counter with a critical eye to decide what can be stored and what can stay, advises Dellutri. For instance, the coffeemaker is a must, but how about that food dehydrator you rarely use? Sayonara. This way, you'll make room for a bottle rack or baby-food maker. Clean out a drawer to corral pump parts and pacis. Eventually you'll keep baby spoons, bowls, and sippy cups here.



Make room in your fridge Baby may be on an all-liquid diet now, but you'll still need to allocate some real estate to breast milk and formula, plus all those delish casseroles that friends and family will bring over when they come to meet your mini me. So when your fridge is nearly empty (ideally *before* you go food shopping), give it a good cleaning. Work from top to bottom, and take everything out, tossing expired or unidentifiable food, says DeMorrow. Then wipe the shelves with a warm sponge, scrubbing especially sticky ones with diluted white vinegar. Do the same with the shelves in the door. Line a spill-prone area with a paper towel and change it out frequently to help keep it cleaner.

Save time on sterilizing As a new parent, you may suddenly feel as if you're surrounded by a squadron of pump parts, bottles, nipples, pacis, and teething toys that all need to be sterilized. The good news: "We no longer suggest you boil them," says DeMorrow. "Studies show hot, soapy water kills common germs."

● Laundry Helpers

Reevaluate your hamper Soon your miracle of life will produce mounds of laundry, so now might be the time to upgrade your hamper to a model

with compartments or purchase another one just for the nursery.

Do the laundry ahead of time

Washing and folding those teeny sleepers is a task that moms-to-be say they don't mind, says Dellutri. It makes the life-changing leap that's about to happen feel very real.

Remove packaging and any tags or labels that might irritate sensitive skin. Use a detergent that's free and clear of dyes or perfumes, or one marketed especially for infants.

Prepare for stains Once your newborn arrives, you may wonder why you bother to dress her, due to all the mess she so easily produces! Spit-up, formula, baby food, poop, and urine are all best treated with an enzymatic stain cleaner, which is formulated to break down stain and soil molecules. Use it on the fabric as soon as possible. If you don't plan on doing laundry right away (or if a spot is super stubborn), spray on the stain remover and soak the item in cool water until you can machine-wash it. **FP**

STOP! WHAT NOT TO DO

If the nesting bug hits hard, you may have the urge to tackle every crevice in your home, but wait! You can skip areas you don't touch frequently or Baby won't come into contact with.

That means you can save for later, or heck, never: the top of the fridge, windows, windowsills, ceilings, crown molding, and the garage.

While you may feel your little one needs the white-glove treatment, remember that infants who don't receive it—like your next child!—turn out just fine too.