

## Baby Care for Adoptive Parents

By Jennifer Gamper-Meenan, RN, MSW, IAC Center Counselor

Becoming a parent is a joyous experience. Most parents feel both excited and anxious about how they will experience and handle the first months of having a newborn. In addition adoptive parents have some unique concerns. The months leading up to the arrival of a newborn can feel like eternity. The excitement of having a newborn; along with the fear of “is this really going to happen” leave some parents unsure of how to prepare for their baby.

Now is the time to take control and begin to feel more confident and comfortable prior to their arrival. Parents can begin by taking a baby care class. The IAC Center [Baby Care for Adoptive Parents Workshop](#) will allow new adoptive parents to learn in a setting that allows them to feel open to asking questions and meeting others with similar stories; and to focus on baby care and new parenting issues rather than labor and delivery; or breastfeeding.

You will learn about:

- Necessary items for travel, hotels, first days with **your** infant
- Expectations for the hospital
- What you need once the baby is home: the “must haves” and items that “would be nice” to have too.
- Medical: newborn testing, vaccinations, procedures, care of infant while in hospital
- Psychological: adoption issues
- Baby Care: feeding, burping, diapers, swaddling/soothing, bathing, cord care
- Basic medical care
- Understanding your infants needs and handling a “cranky baby”
- Car seat safety
- Choosing a pediatrician

Some agencies are now requiring that couples become certified in CPR. Call your local American Red Cross or hospital to sign your self up for an Infant CPR course. They are essential to caring for your newborn and will make you feel prepared in case of an unexpected emergency.

Obtaining a pediatrician is an essential part of prenatal care. Finding someone you want to trust with your child is very vital. You will be in close communication with this person for many years to come. A recommendation

from a friend or relative is your best reference. Call the pediatrician's office during this waiting period and make an appointment to interview them. Check out and compare a few in your area. Find out what hospitals they are affiliated with. Ask if they have worked with adoptive families and whether they can be available if you have questions while at the hospital. Ask if they have found it useful to gather any particular information to help with the ongoing medical care of a child who was adopted. This will give you the opportunity to let them get to know you as well. Having your pediatrician selected prior to the delivery will also give you another resource should any concerns arise.

Pre-Adoptive Support Groups are a wonderful way to find support from other parents with similar stories. The groups will allow you to discuss various issues pertaining to the adoption process as well as help to prepare you for the arrival of a newborn.

The first few days with an infant can bring on a mixture of emotions. Every baby is born with a different temperament and personality. As new parents it may seem overwhelming. Try to relax and give yourself time to acclimate. Enjoy these next first days and months appealing to your baby's senses. Be patient with yourself, your partner and your infant. As time goes by, you will get to know your infants needs and soon begin to anticipate them. By taking the time to take the various classes needed in addition to finding the best pediatrician you can, you too will be well prepared to becoming the best parent you can be.