

What to bring to the hospital for your baby's first operation: a mom's recommendations

Amber, the mother of a baby with hypoplastic left heart syndrome who was treated at Boston Children's, helped create this list:

- 12 x 12 blanket:** "We had a small square blanket for our baby, and the nurses used it all the time. It was a nice way to cover her since she couldn't wear clothes. I recommend bringing three in case they get dirty."
 - Baby-receiving blankets:** "They are prettier than the hospital blankets, softer and more personal. Once our baby was doing better, the nurses would cover her bed with the receiving blanket and then lay her on it. Then, they would cover her with the smaller 12x12 or swaddle her. While all of the other moms are at home placing their baby in the nursery they prepared for them, we heart moms need to make a nursery out of a hospital room. It was nice to see the things we had been given by loved ones wrapped around our baby."
 - Baby-wearing gear:** "A great way to calm fussy babies and promote bonding! The Moby Wrap is great, especially for small newborns that love to be held!"
 - Books, magazines**
 - Bouncy seat:** "To help with reflux issues or to help calm a fussy baby."
 - Bottles/nipples:** "The hospital provided bottles and nipples, but I wanted to use the kind I had at home. It never occurred to me to bring my own or buy some. If you want your baby to use a specific bottle-nipple combo, bring your own."
 - Breastfeeding pillow:** "This makes nursing or bottle-feeding your baby easier and more comfortable in the hospital. My Breast Friend Pillow provides more back support for mom."
 - Camera:** "I wish I had taken a picture of our baby with all of her nurses. They were all a blessing to us and will forever be part of her story."
 - Car seat:** "To leave the hospital in and to use for car seat test before discharge."
 - Chap stick:** "It can feel very dry in the hospital."
 - Clothes that are appropriate for the season in Boston:** It can get very cold in the winter and very warm in the summer, and sometimes the weather shifts dramatically from one day to the next. To be on the safe side, expect freezing cold snowy days in the winter and hot humid days in the summer.
 - Comfortable blanket**
 - Comfortable pillow:** "Sometimes the only way to escape from the stress is to try to sleep. A bad pillow will not help the situation. I know it sounds silly, but bringing a comfy pillow is something I wish I had thought of."
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- "These ideas may seem frivolous compared to the idea of having a child with major cardiac issues, but the day in and day out of hospital life can wear on you in ways that you never imagined. Anything that can make life a little more bearable can only help you and your baby." — Addie's parent*
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- Create a Care Page or Caring Bridge Page** so you can more easily communicate with family and friends. They can also be used as a journal for yourself. Caring Bridge is available in English and Spanish.
 - Egg crate mattress:** "I think we spent three weeks sleeping in a chair. Bringing an egg crate mattress made a huge difference."
 - Going-home outfit:** "You'll want to take a ton of pictures!"
 - Measuring spoons:** "We stayed in Boston for a week after discharge and needed to measure her formula. We used a medicine cup, and it was not easy. Having a real tablespoon and teaspoon would have been wonderful."

- Name and phone number for preferred pharmacy near your home**
- Name and contact information for your pediatrician**
- Name and contact information for your local cardiologist** (if needed).
- Names and contact information of people you can ask for help:** "Here's some ideas of things to ask for help with: grocery shopping, caring for your other children, cooking meals, checking home for mail or security, cleaning and laundry, making or canceling appointments, making phone calls, driving or helping with transportation, caring for pets, staying with you at the hospital and staying at the bedside so that you can take a break."
- Pictures of family:** "To post in room or on crib."
- Planner or diary:** "A planner is always nice to document your child's overall health each day and track when dosages and medicines changed or stopped. You think you will remember, but you are so nervous. I wrote it all

down and would always be looking through it. You feel like you have some control if you write things down, and I felt like I was somehow helping. Also, if you keep a diary, it can be a release to express emotions, and it can help later on when you look back at what you have been through."

- Slip-on shoes:** "You lie down and get up so often, who wants to fiddle with laces?"
- Small cooler with ice pack:** "You may not always have immediate access to a refrigerator for pumped breast milk, especially in the middle of the night!"
- Small stuffed animals:** "The nurses will use them to prop up tubes, arms, legs—and even your baby."
- Socks and hats:** "Calories are preserved by keeping the heat in."
- Two-piece pajamas for your child:** "Pajamas with snaps and no feet. NO ZIPPERS! The lines and tubes will make zippers and footed jammies impossible."
- Wet wipes**