

AIR TRAVEL WITH A BABY/TODDLER

Air travel with a baby or a toddler can be intimidating. With a little planning and preparation, air travel can be successful.

1. Get the right flight

If you can, plan your flight during your baby's sleepest time. That might mean taking the red eye, but with any luck the baby will nap most of the flight.

2. Strategic Seating

The FAA recommends that babies under 40 pounds be secured in a car seat on airplanes, but it is not required. Airlines may have special rates for infants, so check ahead and see if purchasing a separate seat for your baby meets your travel budget.

If you book an extra seat you will be able to bring your car seat on board and the flight attendant can help you install it.

If you do not fly with a car seat use a soft carrier, this will make it easier for you to relax and get comfortable.

If the plane has three seats across, book the aisle for you and the window for your partner. Other travelers are less likely to request middle seats. The aisle seat will allow you to get up more easily for diaper changes or to walk a fussy baby. The window seat will give you more privacy for nursing. Try to reserve the bulkhead seats. You will not have a row in front of you, providing you with a little more room. You cannot sit in the emergency exit row seats with a baby or toddler.

3. Give yourself extra time

Make sure you get to the airport with plenty of time to check in, feed and change the baby. You don't want to be so rushed that dealing with the inevitable missing pacifier or sudden diaper change becomes a full-scale crisis.

4. Bring everything you think you'll need -- and then some.

Make sure you have more than enough of everything in case your flight is delayed. That means extra diapers, extra clothes, extra snacks, extra wipes and extra formula (if you're bottle feeding). Remember, too, that planes at the gate can be warm, but once you're in the air, it can feel extra chilly so dress your baby in layers to make it easier to deal with temperature variations. Bring extra clothing for you, too.

Sitting stuck on a plane with baby spit-up souring on your shoulder is not the way you want to start (or end) your trip! Tuck an extra t-shirt into your diaper bag just in case.

5. Be stroller smart.

Pack the sturdiest but most compact stroller you have. Practice beforehand by loading it yourself with your diaper bag, baby, and carry-ons to make sure it holds up to the challenge of racing to your next flight. (If you'll be bringing your car seat onto the plane, make sure you've figured out how to transport that, too.) You'll be able to gate-check your stroller as you board the plane, so bring it even if you have a baby who would rather be carried; it'll come in handy to transport your carry-ons.

6. Don't be shy about asking for help.

Flight attendants can help you get comfortable, bring you water to mix up a bottle, dispose of stinky diapers, grab an extra pacifier out of your bag in the overhead and even hold your baby so you can take a trip to the bathroom.

7. Dealing with tears.

Traveling is hard on everybody and some babies are just less amenable to changes in scenery and routine. Try nursing or giving her something to suck on (bottle/pacifier) to relieve the pressure in her ears, walking the aisles (if you can) or adding or removing a layer of clothes. Unfortunately, sometimes there's nothing you can do but hang in there. Don't assume every traveler on the plane is glaring at you -- most parents know exactly what you're going through!

8. A word about breastfeeding.

Contact the airline by e-mail before traveling and ask what the policy is concerning breastfeeding on the plane. Print it and bring it with you so that if you are questioned by an attendant you can present the policy.

Consider requesting a seat by the window and book the seat next to you if you won't be flying with your partner. This will allow you to both secure your baby in a car seat and allow more room for you to breastfeed.

Ask the flight attendant for a blanket or bring your own cover-up to help you be discreet.

Helpful websites: <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/infantandtoddlernutrition/breastfeeding/travel-recommendations.html>

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/news-features-and-safety-tips/Pages/Air-Travel-Tips-from-the-American-Academy-of-Pediatrics.aspx>

RESOURCE INFORMATION-

CDC: Travel Recommendations for the Nursing Mother, AAP: Traveling with a Newborn to 8 month old.

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