

You may want to pack two bags for the hospital or birth centre: a small overnight bag for the items you'll need during labour and a larger bag for everything else that you'll need later. Here's a list of things that experienced mums recommend packing.

For labour

- Your birth plan.
- Your eyeglasses, if you need any. Even if you usually wear contacts, you'll probably need or want to take them out at some point during your stay.
- A hair band and clips, if you think you might want them.
- Lip gloss or vasaline
- A bathrobe, nightgown, slippers, and a couple of pairs of socks. The hospital may provide you with a gown but most will allow you to wear your own clothes if you prefer. Choose something loose and comfortable that you don't mind getting ruined. You'll need to wear a gown instead of pants so that your practitioner can check your cervix. Choose a top with short, loose sleeves so your blood pressure can be checked easily and so you can slip your top off easily if you want to change and have an IV in place. You might also want to bring your own slippers and robe for walking around during the early stages of labour.
- Something to read, if you're so inclined.
- Massage oils or lotions, music, whatever you need to help you relax.
- A picture of someone or something you love, anything you find reassuring.

For your partner/birthing partner

- Money for parking and change for vending machines.
- A few basic toiletries, such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant.
- A change of clothes
- Some snacks and something to read during the early stages.
- A camera/video camera and film or tape or a memory card and batteries. Someone has to document the big event! (NOTE: Not all hospitals allow videotaping of the birth itself, but there's usually no rule against taping during labour or after the birth.)

Postpartum

- A fresh nightgown.
- Snacks! After many hours of labour, you're likely to be pretty hungry and you don't want to have to rely on the hospital's food.
- A nursing bra, breast pads, and maternity underwear, if you'd prefer not to wear the net panties they'll give you at the hospital. Chances are, whatever underwear you do wear the first few days will get stained, even with sanitary pads (which the hospital provides). Sanitary pads are a must have, some women bleed heavily, buy the maternity pads (heavy sanitary towels may not be sufficient!).
- Toiletries. Toothbrush, toothpaste, hairbrush, lip balm, deodorant, and makeup, if it's important to you.
- Your address book and prepaid phone card or mobile phone. After the baby's born you'll want to call family and friends to let them know the good news. Note: Some hospitals don't allow mobile phones to be used in the labour and delivery area, so you may want to ask about it ahead of time.
- A going-home outfit. Bring something roomy and easy to get into — believe it or not, you'll probably still look 5 or 6 months pregnant — along with a pair of flat shoes. The last thing you'll be worrying about when you go home is whether your outfit is fashionable.

For your baby

- An infant car seat. You can't drive your baby home without one!
- A going-home outfit (one-piece stretchy outfits are easiest) and a snowsuit if it's very cold
- A receiving blanket (a heavy one if the weather's cold)
- A pair of socks or booties
- A hat
- Nappies at least 1 full pack or 12-18 washable nappies (whichever way you choose to go!) you should be able to send someone out to get some more for you if you or baby stay in longer.

What not to bring

- Jewellery
- Lots of cash, credit cards, or any other valuables
- Work. Yes, we actually know fast-track types who have sent business e-mails from the hospital room, made work-related phone calls, and reviewed spreadsheets.