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Health

4 Ways to Raise a Natural Baby

Buying house plants, shopping organic and other smart ideas for raising baby in a safe, clean environment

By Charlotte Latvala, *Babytalk*

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It's lovely to say you'd like to raise your new baby as naturally as possible, but what does that really mean? Do you ban all synthetic fabrics from your house? Begin a granola and tofu diet, or move to a self-sustaining farm in the countryside? Relax, say the experts, a natural lifestyle doesn't

have to be an all-or-nothing endeavor. Even following a couple of the tips below can improve your baby's health and well-being. Here are four key areas to focus on, whether you're pregnant or a new mom.

food: from organic farms to breastfeeding

If you're ever going to make an effort to eat healthy, now is the time. "Pregnant and nursing moms should try to make as much of their diet organic as possible," says Robert Sears, M.D., co-author of *HappyBaby: The Organic Guide to Baby's First 24 Months*. "We know that pesticides can harm developing brain cells, even in small amounts." If going organic is outside your budget, Dr. Sears suggests buying at least the "dirty dozen" organically: apples, blueberries, celery, cherries, grapes (imported), kale, nectarines, peaches, potatoes, strawberries, spinach and sweet bell peppers. "These 12 foods have more pesticides than any others," he says. Produce that's okay to buy non-organically includes asparagus, avocado, cabbage, eggplant, mango, onion, sweet corn (frozen), sweet peas (frozen) and watermelon.

Other diet do's for pregnant and nursing moms, says Sears: Eat the right fats, which nourish baby's developing brain and nervous system. Think cold-water fish like wild salmon, walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and tofu. And don't forget to drink at least eight glasses of water per day to stay hydrated; nursing moms should sip throughout the day.



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day.

For baby, breast milk is the ultimate natural food, says Alan Greene, M.D., author of Raising Baby Green. "You can't get any more organic." Of course, not all moms breastfeed exclusively. If you use formula or expressed breast milk to feed your baby, make sure you choose BPA-free bottles, cautions Dr. Greene. BPA, aka Bisphenol A, is a chemical found in many plastic containers, including baby bottles. Its estrogen-like effects may disturb the hormonal system and an infant's hormonal and sexual development. "BPA is also found in some pacifiers, teethingers and the like," says Dr. Greene. "So double-check labels and make sure anything your baby frequently puts her mouth on is BPA-free."

air: a fix for harmful fumes

The air in your house may not seem dirty, but it is, thanks to fumes from harsh cleaning products, secondhand smoke and residue from building materials such as particleboard, says Dr. Greene. Limit what you can: Don't allow anyone to smoke in the house, skip harsh chemical cleaners, and change your furnace filter frequently. The best all-around defense against harmful fumes is the simplest: Bring the outdoors in. "Open the windows whenever you can," says Dr. Greene. With a baby under 12 months, don't worry about pollen and other outdoor allergens, he adds. "Some degree of pollen during their first year is probably a protective thing," he says. "Studies show that if kids visit a farm, even once, during their first year of life, they are much less likely to develop allergies." Another path to cleaner air: green growing things. "Believe it or not, house plants are a huge help in removing pollutants from indoor air," says Dr. Greene.

Most discount stores now carry a range of affordable, organic cleaning supplies, notes Lauren Feder, M.D., author of Natural Baby and Childcare. Another option is to use natural cleansers you already have in your fridge or pantry. "Vinegar is an antiseptic that kills most bacteria, viruses and mold," says Dr. Feder. "Hydrogen peroxide has antiseptic qualities and is considered a safe and natural cleanser." Pour vinegar and hydrogen peroxide into two separate spray bottles and use in tandem to clean countertops and wood cutting boards. Other natural cleaning agents to try: baking soda for scouring stove tops, and lemon, which kills household bacteria and removes rust from copper and stainless-steel pots and pans.

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on Aug 01, 2010

I'm all for feeding my kids all healthy foods - fruits and veggies. Don't underestimate the importance of regular exercise for them (which is really all playground fun and games). Sometimes when fresh ingredients aren't readily available, we pull out a bag of Gudernoobs (dried fruit/nut/flax snack made by WooHoo Foods) from the freezer and we're all set!

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