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Raising Baby On The Cheap

By Carrie Lauth

Have you ever read those reports on the cost of raising a child?

The last time I checked, I was told that it would cost the astronomical figure of \$430,470 to raise my baby... and that didn't include college tuition!

The people who come up with these figures must not be very creative. Some of the best things you can do for your child are free or very inexpensive. Here are some tips for raising kids on the cheap.

1) Breastfeed

You can save roughly \$1,000 in formula costs alone in your baby's first year by breastfeeding. Check out this report:

http://www.natural-moms.com/cost_of_baby_formula.html

This figure doesn't include the extra costs you would incur from Doctor visits and medications. Breastfed babies are less likely to need medical care and don't get sick as often as their formula fed peers.

Formula feeding increases a baby's risk of both acute and chronic health problems not only during childhood but well into adulthood. If you're a working and breastfeeding Mother, you're less likely to miss work than if you were formula feeding.

In addition, a breastfed baby can go straight from the breast to an open cup, thus eliminating pacifiers, bottles and sippy cups.

Even baby food is not necessary. The healthiest first foods for baby are fresh fork-mashed avocado, banana, sweet potato and the like. If you're breastfeeding, you may be able to delay the introduction of solids until as late as 8 or 9 months.

2) Use Cloth Diapers

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All I am saying...is give cloth a chance!

The modern cloth diapers are nothing like Grandma's. The nicer ones are made from high tech materials that wick moisture away from baby, and utilize snaps or velcro to close instead of pins.

They save you a lot of money especially if you save them and use them again for subsequent children. You can buy them cheaply at thrift stores, online auctions, and diaper services (check your phone book for listings). Or ask for cloth diapers as shower gifts.

3) Rethink your Needs

Think about what you REALLY need to raise your baby. A lot of the expensive items sold in baby stores are completely unnecessary and some are even harmful. Most of the people raising children on the planet today do so without cribs, walkers (which Pediatricians recommend against anyway!),

playpens, changing tables, swings, "educational" toys, etc.

Many Moms have found that a soft cloth carrier or baby sling was the only gadget they really needed. Baby is happy, stimulated by your activities and entertained. And Mom can get stuff done!

The best toys are simple and classic and require imagination. These are often the least expensive too! And most kids do best with few toys that are rotated. Think back to your own childhood...what were your favorite toys? If you can even remember them, they were probably not loud, flashy electronic battery powered gadgets. Your best childhood memories probably come from activities...playing in Grandma's backyard, going places with Mom and Dad, the simple things.

For the baby stuff you really can't live without...

4) Buy or Obtain Used

Let friends know that you welcome hand-me-downs and you'll be blessed with all sorts of great stuff!

High quality clothing and baby equipment generally doesn't wear out from just one child's use. For safety, check to make sure items haven't been recalled and get the owner's manuals from the manufacturer's websites. (The one exception would be child safety seats. Always buy those new.)

Shop at thrift and consignment shops and online auctions. Some of the very best deals can be found at regional consignment sales. Check local parenting magazines and websites for the locations of these.

Personally, I prefer used clothing because much new clothing has been treated with flame retardants and other scary chemicals that can be absorbed into children's softer skin.

Being a frugal parent minimizes the impact on the environment, saves you money and models a healthy lifestyle to your kids. Teach your kids what really matters in life...people, not things!

Carrie Lauth publishes an informative newsletter for Moms doing things the natural way. Get your free issue at

<http://www.natural-moms.com>

Cutting Costs While Raising Babies

By Kara Kelso

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Raising children is expensive, so saving money wherever we can is important (moms need the money for those rare trips to the spa so they can relax, right?). Here are a few simple ways to cut your costs when you have a baby:

1. Make Baby Food

Instead of buying the expensive jars of baby food – make it instead! Blenders are a great investment, and if you can get one second hand that's even better. When you cook supper, save aside some of your meal to throw in the blender. The baby's age will of course determine what will food you make for them. Potatoes are always a good thing to have on hand and cook up quickly.

2. Buy cheap diapers with the name brands

Some of us may have learned the hard way that the cheaper diapers are no good over night or on outings. But when you plan to just stay home, put your little one in a cheap diaper. Save the expensive ones for over night and on car rides.

3. Buy reusable wipes

Cotton wipes are fantastic, and can even save you money. While the initial cost may appear to be more, you will save money in the long run. Don't forget a low cost natural wet wipe solution! If you prefer not to wash them out when you have a dirty diaper, have some store brand wipes on hand to use just for that.

4. Double up on baths

If you have two or more children, throw them all in the tub at the same time. Do it while they are little because you can't do this later. The kids will enjoy being able to splash in the tub together, and it will save you time as well.

5. Buy second hand clothes

No sense in buying hundreds of dollars in new clothes when they grow out of them so fast. Have a few sets of nice, new clothes, but buy the majority of them from second hand stores or garage sales. When

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they grow out of them, you can hold a garage sale yourself or donate them back to the second hand store.

6. Breast feed, if possible

Formula is expensive! It's amazing what a newborn can eat, so if possible, always breastfeed them for the first several months. Not only is it free, but you are also getting your child off to a wonderful start.

These are just a few ideas that you can use to cut costs. Take some of that money that you will save over the year and do something special with the kids!

Kara Kelso is the owner of Mom's Market, which is an online mall where shoppers can support mothers by purchasing products and services from a mom-run business. Visit: <http://www.momsmarketonline.com> .



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