

AS THEY GROW 0-12 months



It is absolutely natural to go crazy when you leave your little one for the first time. But as much as you adore your baby, a 24-hour or longer break may just be what you need: a chance to take a breather, reconnect with your spouse, and (hallelujah!) sleep through the night. Whether you're travelling on a business trip or for a mini vacation, use our guide to make your time apart less of a big deal.

### **I'm not sure whom to leave him with.**

The better your child knows his caregiver, the smoother it will be. "A grandparent or another family member is always better than a new babysitter," says Dr. Fran Walfish, author of *The Self-Aware Parent*. So, if your baby hasn't spent much time with your best friend, and you're planning to have her baby-sit, it's better to test the waters on a night you step out for dinner with your spouse before you try for an overnighter. When you're ready to leave her for the night, get your friend to come to you rather than leave your baby at her house, he suggests.

### **My baby is too young.**

Between 4 and 9 months is actually the overnighter sweet spot. Before that, your baby may still be perfecting breastfeeding and waking up a lot at night—which makes it a less-than-ideal time to leave her with another caregiver. Wait too long and you'll have a new set of problems. "Separation anxiety starts to rear its ugly head between 9 and 15 months," says Dr. Ari Brown, co-author of *Baby 411*. "So if you want to get away with your spouse, do it before this phase."

### **I'm breastfeeding.**

There are ways to handle this concern. "Breast pumps are the best solution when you are travelling. If you are out for a couple of days, you can easily stow what you have pumped. It is important to make the baby used to it

if your kid has always been breastfed. Accepting bottle\* milk is also not an easy task. Try it at least a month before your trip," says Dr. Archana Dhawan Bajaj, Senior Gynaecologist, Nurture ART centre, Delhi.


### **I want the caregiver to do it my way.**

For her first weekend getaway without 14-week-old Riya, Nikki Patel, Bengaluru, made sure her father and her mother-in-law (both helped) were prepared: "I sent emails with instructions for picking Riya up from childcare and about her feeding schedule. I also posted her schedule on our fridge." It's smart to pass along info about your baby's likes, dislikes and daily activities; if she stays on routine it'll be less stressful, says Dr. Jennifer Wider, author of *The New Mom's Survival Guide*. But remember it's not the end of the world if the caregiver does things differently than you would.

### **She'll miss me.**

Doing some prep work will help her take your leaving in stride. For starters, don't plan a secret escape if your baby is 9 months or older. "Many parents think it's easier to sneak away and avoid the drama as you walk out," says Dr. Brown. "But telling your child you're leaving will help relieve her separation anxiety."

### **I'm afraid I'll miss my baby too much.**

Ditch the guilt and remember that having a few days all to yourself will probably make you a calmer person and a better parent. "Keep a photo of your baby with you. You can also request your relatives and see your baby through webcam or hear her voice over the phone. You can record your baby's voice and hear it when you miss your child," suggests Dr. Samir Parikh, Chief Psychiatrist, Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Max Healthcare, Delhi. 

See Resource for Importance Notice.