

What's in THE BAG?



Some expectant mothers have their hospital bags packed and ready in the car not long after discovering the faint blue line on their pregnancy test. Others wait until they feel the first twinge of contractions to decide what to pack. The hospital bag is the first real sign that something special is about to happen and each bag is as individual as its owner. **Heather Zubek** chats to a few Perth mums who have been there and packed that.

My pregnancy book said I should pack my hospital bag and keep it by the front door by week 32. By week 12 you couldn't get in or out of our house. I had packed my cassette player and an old tape of Neil Diamond (it was 16 years ago) as I was determined to boogie this baby into the world. In went an entire homeopathic birth kit complete with 70 remedies with a detailed booklet on what to use and when. Packed separately was a packet of six bottles of essential oils, again accompanied by detailed instructions for my husband. In went three novels, a pad of writing paper, some toiletries, a baby singlet, nappies, and an entire winter wardrobe for the baby's trip home. The fact that it was in the middle of a Perth heat wave didn't even occur to me. Everything was ready except, as I found out when I gave birth, there wasn't one piece of clothing for me.

My second son was in such a hurry to be born the hospital bag didn't even make it to the car.

Some Perth mums explain what they took along for their big day in hospital.



JULIE HOSKING, Editor, West Weekend Magazine, Mum to Aidan and Maya

I'm not a scented candles kind of gal and while I love music, I couldn't think of a thing I wanted to listen to while in labour. Surely I'd be too busy giving birth? So I went to hospital the first time with the bare minimum – toiletries and changes of clothes for the new baby.

The second time around, I was a little wiser particularly as I was being induced again and I knew it could take a while. I took a good book (there's only so much TV you can watch) and remembered that I also needed something comfortable to sleep in and to receive visitors in - the nightie didn't make it out of the delivery ward. And even though the bottle of champers that came along to go in the fridge each time (not the same bottle I hasten to add) didn't get drunk because I was breastfeeding, it was still nice to have it there as a kind of symbolic celebration.

NATASHA LESTER, Author and mother of Ruby, Audrey and Darcy and creator of blog www.whilethekidsaresleeping.wordpress.com

With my first baby, I had read all the stories that said labour would take a really long time so I went in prepared with a slew of things to fill up the hours – books, playing cards, food, notepad and pen (in case inspiration struck, which of course it didn't). My labour was only about five hours long so I used none of these. Instead, I should have taken some anti-nausea homeopathic medicine because I vomited quite spectacularly for a good couple of hours.

The second time around I packed the anti-nausea remedy. It was the first thing I took out of my bag in the birthing suite and I waited, armed and ready for the first wave of queasiness to hit. It never did.

For each birth I took the self-hypnosis tapes prepared for me by the wonderful Raphael Centre at St John of God Hospital and I was lucky enough to have the quick, drug free births I'd visualised. Also my acupressure



booklet which, as well as giving my husband something to do, helped with the pain.

The third time, I should have taken some sleep with me. After two considerate girls who both arrived during the day I was not expecting the boy to decide that midnight was a good time to go into labour.

Visit Natasha's blog at www.whilethekidsaresleeping.wordpress.com

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CLAIRE LANGLANDS,
personal stylist
www.livinginstyle.net.au
and Mum to three year old Abriella (3)



I took everything to cover any scenario. You would have thought that I was going to be away for months. Being a stylist it was most important to me (I seriously doubt anyone else cared) that I didn't look daggy! I lived in loungewear. I packed a few pairs of 'yoga' style pants, made from lightweight cotton stretch, which were comfortable and practical. On the top half one of my favourite buys were breast-feeding tank tops. These were purchased from an online maternity store and were fabulous!

Some of the other things I found really helpful were breastfeeding capes, moisturiser, a good book and pamper products. Make sure you pack a good body moisturiser, hand cream and lip salve. A good book also comes in handy.

GILLIAN O'SHAUGHNESSY, *presenter of Afternoons on 720 ABC Perth.*



I packed a really hideous meditation tape and an old cassette boom box thing that was so clunky I felt like a beat boxer...we were all told...it was 25 years ago...that soft music and meditation would help with the birth process...along with a packet of raspberry leaf tea that was supposed to help with labour pain.

The meditation cassette had this man talking incessantly about beautiful seagulls on the beautiful beach in a very strong American accent which was all very 80's but it didn't relax me at all...it made me feel slightly ridiculous and it kept making me giggle...not a bad thing I guess but just not the intended effect.

And it's not retro and maybe a bit rude but I was always extremely flat chested when I was younger and I was excited about the prospect of having a cleavage for the first time. Everyone told me when my milk came in that all of a sudden I'd be channeling Pamela Anderson. This was a very thrilling thought for me at the time, so I threw in a few low cut nighties...I carried vanity with me at the oddest moment.

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REBECCA CARMODY, past Stateline presenter for ABC TV and editor of www.wangle.com.au. Mum to Oscar and awaiting Number Two

I'm afraid my list is rather dull. I'm expecting next month and have a bag (sort of) packed. The first time around I packed the kitchen sink and most of it was unnecessary and took up precious space so this time around I'm going for the minimalist approach. Toiletries, my little Sony radio & headphones, a few outfits for the new arrival (Size 0000), favourite moisturiser from The Body Shop (Mango) and new PJs, so I don't have to subject any of the doctors/midwives or nurses to my old PJs with holes. A bottle of apple juice as well. Someone recommended it last time and I drank it all, so I figure why not bring again. This time, we'll also be packing a present for my 18-month-old son Oscar from his new baby brother. It will be a nice way to introduce the pair.



CATE SUTHERLAND Children's editor, Fremantle Press and Mum to Emma (10) and Rufus (9)

Books! Books for you (but leave behind the guilt-inducing parenting manuals) and books for the baby. It's never too early to start reading to babies. When they're really tiny it's such a lovely way to reconnect with your own childhood, rereading your old favourites to them and discovering new treasures together. *The Other Bears* by Michael Thompson is a gorgeous book for babies, and *A Sausage Went for A Walk* is a perennial favourite.

But, having said that, it wouldn't have really mattered what I'd packed for the hospital, because while I was upstairs labouring away, our car was downstairs getting broken into and cleaned out – bag and all!

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Packing for the big day

A spokeswoman from King Edward Memorial Hospital said the hospital recommended women bring the items listed below for themselves and their babies during their stay:

Requirements for mother

- Current medications
- Medicare card and/or private health insurance membership information
- Health Care card (if applicable)
- Loose, comfortable day clothes
- Nighties or pyjamas, dressing gown and slippers
- Nursing bras and one box of disposable breast pads
- Maternity (large) sanitary pads – two packets
- Toiletries including soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, brush/comb.

Requirements for the baby

- Nappies for use during your stay in hospital and for going home
- Baby soap
- A packet of cotton wool balls and cotton buds

- Clothes and a blanket to take the baby home in
- A baby car seat/capsule of your choice must be fitted into your car before taking the baby home

During your stay the hospital or birth centre will supply:

- Sanitary pads and nappies for use following delivery (we recommend you bring your own supply as well)
- Blankets for your baby
- Towels and other linen

The hospital staff does see some of the more unusual items sneaking into the hospital bag.

“We do hear funny stories about women packing unusual or impractical items such as g-string underwear for use after the birth,” the spokeswoman said. “Sometimes women might bring in things to help them through their labour like massage oils and calming music, only to find they have a quick labour and there was no time to use any of it. One thing to remember is that space in hospital rooms tends to be limited so it’s important not to pack too much; your partner or family members can bring in any extra items that you might need during your stay.”

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