



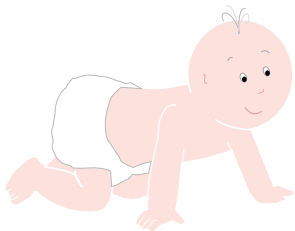
Ann Douglas is an award-winning writer and the author of 27 books, including the bestselling *The Mother of All Pregnancy Books*, *The Mother of All Baby Books*, *The Mother of All Toddler Books*, *The Mother of All Parenting Books*, and *The Mother of All Pregnancy Organizers*. You can find book excerpts, articles, tip sheets, and more by visiting Ann's website at www.having-a-baby.com.

Baby Fever: Why It's So Easy to Overshop for Baby

by Ann Douglas

Finding yourself being hit with the urge to buy something – anything – for your baby-to-be? Sounds like you've been hit with a bad case of baby fever – a condition that tends to run rampant among mothers-to-be and that can be almost impossible to cure until your bank account runs dry and/or your credit card finally gives up the ghost. Here are six reasons why so many pregnant women end up shopping until they (literally!) drop:

1. **Pregnancy lasts for nine months – about six times longer than the holiday shopping season.** Imagine how much debt you could ring up if you were to spend nine months loading up on gifts for the holidays. Chances are you'd have an armload of presents for each person. Well, that's exactly what happens if you fall into the all-too-common trap of hitting the baby boutiques the moment the pregnancy test comes back positive: you end up going on a nine-month-long shopping spree. Even if you only spend \$50 each time you step inside a baby store – the baby world's equivalent to a miracle, by the way – you can easily ring up a couple of thousand dollars worth of purchases by the time your real nesting instinct kicks in. And don't think for a second that you can bypass that late-pregnancy spending spree by getting your shopping out of the way early on: if you've already purchased your baby's entire layette by this stage of the game, you'll simply find other baby-related products to spend your money on.
2. **Most baby clothes are designed to be too adorable for words – just like the babies who wear them.** Just think about what happens at a typical baby shower: there's absolute silence as the mother-to-be opens up a gift and then a chorus of "oohs" and "aahs" as everyone present cooingly admires the adorable duck-covered flannel sleeper, the unspeakably cute miniature running shoes, or whatever other baby-related item happened to come out of the package. The same thing happens the moment you set foot in a baby boutique: you find yourself picking up one adorable outfit after another and, in a matter of minutes, your baby-to-be ends up having a better wardrobe than you do.



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3. **You've already given up all your other vices by this point.** Given that the more rabid pregnancy book authors will leave you feeling like the worst mother in the world if you eat anything other than free-range organic tofu, you're long overdue for a bit of good old-fashioned sinning. And since most of the truly worthwhile vices are temporarily unavailable to a woman in your condition, all you've got left is shopping.

4. **Shopping can help you to pass the time while you're counting down the days until your baby arrives.** It also can serve as a welcome distraction if you're more-than-a-little nervous about what your labor will be like. Fortunately, there are far cheaper ways of keeping yourself occupied while you eagerly – and anxiously – await Junior's grand entrance. Heck, you could probably treat yourself to lunch at the most expensive restaurant in town and an afternoon at the spa and still end up spending less than you would if you were to spend a comparable amount of time hitting the baby boutiques.

5. **It can be next to impossible to distinguish between products that your baby really needs and products that your baby could probably live without.** (Think baby wipe warmers!) Unless you're fortunate enough to be able to drag a veteran parent along on your shopping trip with you – someone who can help you to distinguish between the frills and the necessities and to fend off not-so-well-meaning store clerks who seem determined to help you cram as much as possible into your shopping cart – then you're likely to drop a bundle on stuff that could prove to be a colossal waste of money.

6. **You're too busy falling in love with your baby to worry about mundane things like dollars and cents.** It's only natural to want to shower your beloved with gifts, and this time you're embarking on The Mother of All Love Affairs. But instead of going totally crazy and trying to equip your baby's nursery with one of everything the baby books claim he needs, remind yourself that you're already giving him the one thing he needs most: a mother who loves him. So if you're looking for the ultimate birthday present for your baby, you've already got it. And there's no wrapping required.