

Track CHANGES

Why you should follow baby's day in detail

When it comes to knowing baby's routine, most new parents ask, "What routine?" Just when you can anticipate when baby needs to nap, nurse, or have her nappy changed—her behavior changes.

Although you can't put baby on a schedule, you can learn to make sense of her day—and help keep other caregivers in the loop—by staying on top of details, such

as how many diapers you go through. Of course, combine counting diapers with keeping track of which side your baby last nursed on and how many hours she may (or may not) be sleeping, and it's easy to lose track.

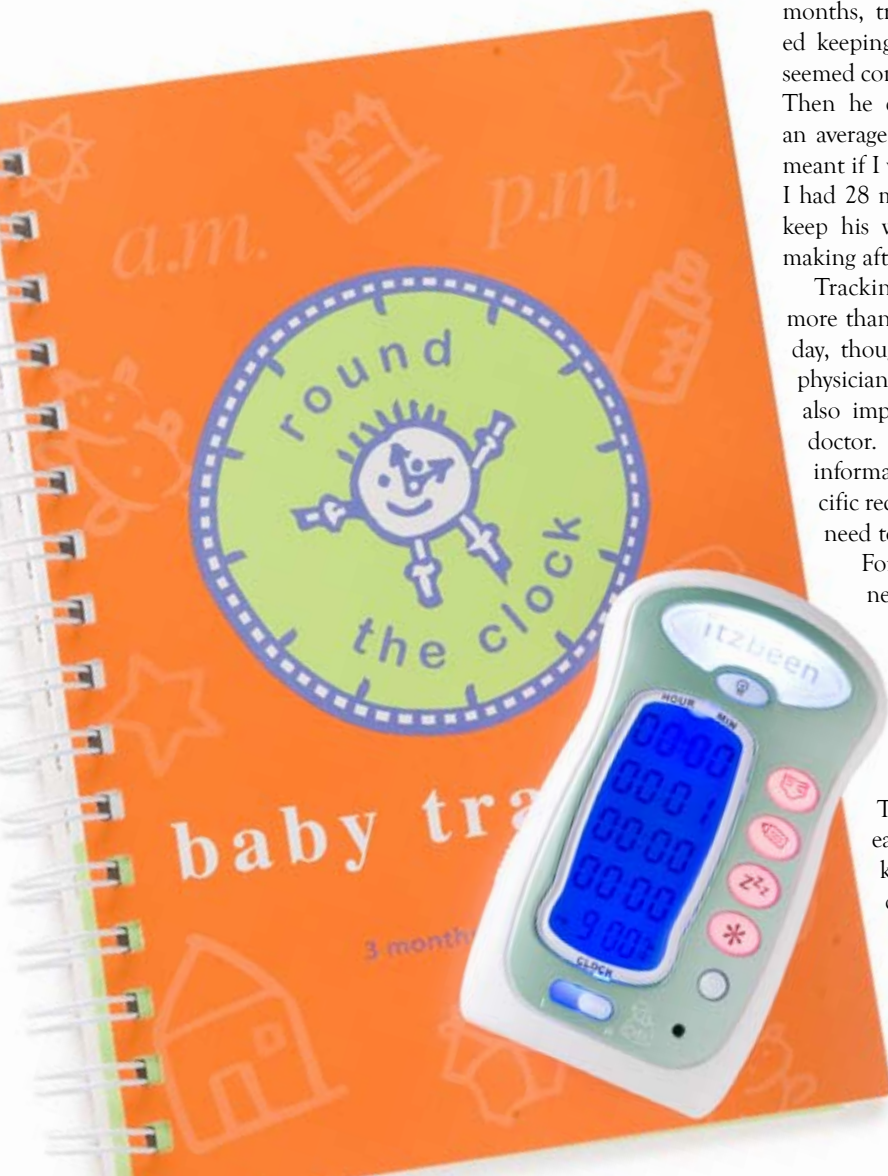
Ben MacNeill, a stay-at-home father in Chapel Hill, NC, says this is why he developed Trixietracker, an online baby-tracking program named for his daughter (\$25 for 6 months, trixietracker.com). "Until I started keeping spreadsheets, Trixie's behavior seemed completely random," MacNeill says. Then he discovered that Trixie slept for an average of 28 minutes each nap. "This meant if I wanted to shower or make a call, I had 28 minutes." The charts also helped keep his wife involved in daily decision-making after she returned to work.

Tracking products like this can do more than provide a record of your baby's day, though. Lili Nasseri, M.D., a family physician in Port Moody, BC, says they also improve communication with your doctor. "When a parent provides exact information, a physician can make specific recommendations on what changes need to be made."

For the simplest tracking, all you need is a clock, a pad, and a pen.

The Round the Clock-Baby Tracker (\$17, timetoo.com), a recycled paper notebook, goes one better with formatted pages. For those who like gadgets, the Itzbeen Baby Care Timer (\$26, itzbeen.com) is an easy-to-use handheld device that keeps track of baby's last feeding, diaper change, and more, but doesn't store data like MacNeill's program.

—Diane Selkirk



Newborn Screening **UPDATE**

Standardized newborn screening is on the horizon, which means that when your baby is whisked away for blood tests in the first day or two after birth, he could be tested for up to 29 disorders. The Newborn Screening Saves Lives Act, recently signed into law by President George W. Bush, establishes national guidelines for newborn screening and authorizes grants to public health agencies to expand screening beyond the existing minimum of genetic, metabolic, hormonal, and functional disorders, which includes diseases like sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis.

"It is unacceptable that babies continue to be born in this country each year with diseases that can be detected by a simple blood test, and then treated to prevent serious complications," says Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), who sponsored the

bill. The American College of Medical Genetics and the March of Dimes recommend that all babies be screened for a minimum of 29 disorders. Currently just 19 states and the District of Columbia test for all 29.

"If your state doesn't screen for all 29, we recommend that you contact a commercial laboratory and get materials for the full-screen program," says R. Rodney Howell, M.D., FACMG, President of the American College of Medical Genetics Foundation, noting that adequate funding of the law would mean less legwork for pregnant women and reassurance that newborn screening is comprehensive—in every state.

To check your state, go to genes-r-us.uthscsa.edu.

—Angie Marsh

Checklist: Find a Great **NANNY**

Inspired by her frustration at seeing a nanny studying on a park bench rather than watching her charges, and the realization that she didn't know how to pass the information on to the children's parents, Jill Starishevsky, a mother of two, dreamed up HowMyNanny.com.

On her website, passersby can send messages to parents—about both good and bad deeds a nanny does—by entering the identifying number on a license plate attached to the stroller. Now Starishevsky's become a nanny expert, in addition to her legal background as a prosecutor of child abuse and sex crimes in New York City. Because finding a great nanny, or any childcare provider, starts with the interview, here are her tips:

- DEFINE THE JOB.** What hours must the nanny be available, and is there any overtime expected? List specific duties.
- SCHEDULE YOUR FIRST INTERVIEW IN PERSON** at a public location, such as a café. This protects your family and is safer for the nanny, since she doesn't know you yet.
- ESTABLISH RAPPORT.** "Sometimes I think nannies are nervous," Starishevsky says. "So it's a matter of doing whatever you would do when you first meet someone to make them feel comfortable." Try telling a story about what your child did that day to initiate small talk.
- FIND OUT IF YOU HAVE SIMILAR CHILD-REARING PHILOSOPHIES.** Start by asking how he became a nanny and why he likes his job, then move on to open-ended questions, such as, "How do you discipline children?"
- ADDRESS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.** Does the candidate have the skills needed, such as infant and child CPR?

- ASK SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE QUESTIONS** for your child's age, such as, "When is it safe to give a child honey?" for infants. "There are a lot of good questions that parents either don't know to ask or feel like it's too imposing to ask," Starishevsky says. "They're more concerned about being polite than getting to the heart of the matter."
- THOROUGHLY CHECK** all provided references.
- DO A BACKGROUND CHECK** covering the last seven years.

