

Brat Pack

## LOVE TO MINGLE

Model Ramneek Paintal's son Adhiraj is a sociable child because he's regularly been meeting new people since he was an infant



# Carry on BABY

RAMNEEK PAINTAL, model, mother of three-year-old Adhiraj

**P**EOPLE SAY life changes when you have a baby, but actually, life becomes what you make of it. You can't plan anything. You just have to gradually introduce your child and yourselves to the kind of life you want to have. My social life hasn't stopped because of my baby.

I was back at work within three months of having Adhiraj. It wasn't difficult – I had both physical and psychological support from my in-laws and parents. And besides, with an infant, it's not difficult. All she or he does is sleep and eat.

Still, my husband Rajat and I didn't go out for all the parties we were invited to. Or we'd balance our outings – I'd take charge at home and Rajat would go and vice versa. But when Adhiraj was three months old, I resumed my outings – visits to friends and cousins or family gatherings. That's because the more you take your child out, the better it is for both the parents and the child. And I was never a paranoid parent. Adhiraj plays with relatives and friends and that's why he is not growing up to be clingy. He has become a sociable child. I have noticed that babies who are not exposed to a social circuit, who do not see too many people around them while they're growing up, become very clingy.

I see the effects of getting him used to other people. These days, when he sees me getting ready to go out, he doesn't make a ruckus. He knows he'll be headed to his grandparents' house. All he says is a sober, "I love you," and he's fine. If a child cries and sulks, it does get difficult for parents to go out and enjoy themselves. Even so, my husband and I don't party every night. We socialise sensibly.

When we go out, we don't leave Adhiraj with servants. Usually, we take him to my father's house

because my parents live close by. If we return late, I don't wake up Adhiraj. I stay the night there too and send him to school from there. I do not want to disturb Adhiraj because of my socialising.

We started taking Adhiraj to restaurants only after he turned one. There, after I seated him, I'd give him something to play with. Most restaurants and malls are child friendly nowadays. I have been taking Adhiraj to malls since he was an infant. I would put him in a pram and roam around. When I sat down for a coffee, I'd notice that he enjoyed seeing people.

When I take him to friends' houses, Adhiraj generally behaves himself, but when he fiddles with things or puts his fingers in sockets, I only have to look at him and he understands he isn't supposed to do that. That's because I have explained to him that if he wants to be where everyone else is, he has to behave or he will be sent inside. So he behaves. Most children listen when you say 'no'.

We go on holidays very often and in fact, we wonder now how we ever had fun before he arrived. We first took him out on a driving holiday to Agra, when

he was just five months old. He gave no trouble because the movement of the car puts a child to sleep. I don't carry ghar ka khana when we travel. But I try and give him safe things to eat. I don't want to make him oversensitive; he should be able to adapt to any environment.

I have also taken him to Mumbai, Bali and Bangkok. During flights, children do get a little restless, so I let him walk around freely in the aisle. When the flight is taking off, I give him something to play with so he is distracted, or give him something to swallow – a bottle of milk or a sweet. Of course, you cannot have your kids bawling and running about in a plane. Avoid that.

If you think having a baby means you're tied to the home forever, you're wrong. Having a child need not interfere with your social life  
by Parul Khanna

**Y**OU'VE been married for a few years and now you think it's time to have a child. But it's a big decision, involving much thought. There's the financial angle, plus worries about a good education, how to bring the child up right and whether you'll be a good parent to the vulnerable baby you'll bring into the world. All normal, regular parenting thoughts.

But there's something else you'd rather not discuss because it seems so... frivolous. And so self-centred that you're already certain you'll make a bad parent. "It's the fact that when I have a baby, my life will come to a standstill," says 29-year-old computer engineer Reema Sen. "Not in terms of my career, but my life. My husband and I have a very active social life and we're not certain we'll be able to give that up for a baby just yet. So we're putting off that decision for a while."

Reema and her husband are one of many couples who delay having a family because they feel children will make them change their lives. But it doesn't have to be that way, says Dr Raghuram Malliah, consultant, neonatology, Fortis La Femme, Delhi. "Of course, a baby will change your life and you will have to

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make adjustments," explains Dr Malliah. "But you can continue with the kind of social life you had before the baby. I encourage all parents to go back to their normal lives and routines. It is great for the parents – and the child."

## IN OR OUT?

Traditionally, a new mother and baby are not allowed to step out of the house for the first 40 days of the baby's life. Why? If you're superstitious, it's to protect both from nazar, or the evil eye. Healthwise, however, there is a risk that the vulnerable newborn will catch an infection. However, as in all other spheres of life, rules, even in this department, are changing.

"Today, children are vaccinated and can be easily treated for infections," says Dr Malliah. "There is no reason for the mother to be cooped up with the child. Many young mothers feel low after giving birth. Going out is good for them. They just have to be a little careful, that's all."

Getting back to normal life is certainly a big help for many young mothers. It makes them feel that life hasn't turned completely upside down. So when wedding and decor stylist Swati Pandya Sood had her first child, Samaira, the first thing she did when they were discharged from hospital was take her tiny little girl to a mall to buy her clothes. On the other hand, Mandira Koirala, owner and founder of the website [www.busybabee.com](http://www.busybabee.com), chose to stay at home for a while. "I thought it was crucial to recover," says Koirala. "Also, since you hardly sleep in the first few months, I didn't have the energy to socialise."

## BABY STEPS

Even if you want to get back to your party routine, if you're a new parent, you're probably hesitant to do so. But you should – in a phased manner, say experts. "Every child goes through stages, so time your socialising accordingly," says Dr Rajeev Chabra, senior consultant pediatrician, Artemis Health Institute, Delhi. An infant is not very demanding, he explains. All she or he needs is milk and sleep. So this is a good time to take your child out, since most places these days have feeding and



OFF WE GO

Going out with infants and toddlers to public places, such as malls and restaurants, has become convenient. Most of them have feeding and nappy changing rooms nowadays.

PHOTO: MCT

## nappy changing rooms

"But by the time the child is four months old, she or he must begin to be weaned. Settling the child into the new routine takes some time, so this is when you must stall your socialising," continues Dr Chabra. "Better still, you and your spouse can alternate sitting with the child or even leave the child with the grandparents."

## SEE THE WORLD

But can you take your child with you everywhere? "Stick to places that have a socially controlled environment," says Dr Chabra. So you can take babies and toddlers to friends' homes, malls, the non-smoking areas of restaurants, parties that are not very loud, on driving holidays, for holidays, even abroad. Says Swati Pandya Sood, "I even take my daughters, two-and-half-year-old Samaira and one-year-old Suhana, to destination weddings, and for weekend getaways."

However, you should avoid taking your child to pubs, crowded markets and bazaars, movie theatres or private parties that are likely to have loud music. Says Dr Malliah, "Movie halls are a no-no. A baby's eardrums are not used to the noise. And movies are not a very good influence on two- or three-year-olds because of all the violence they tend to show."

But other than that, you ought to take

your child out and get him or her used to people. Because this, say experts, helps shape the child into someone who is social, smart and interactive, someone who will develop hobbies and interests of her or his own.

## TEACH THEM YOUNG

A lot of parents worry about taking their children out because of how other people may react to them. "When he was an infant, it was easy to take our son Rohan out," says journalist Neena Kalra. "But now that he can walk and run, we've limited our outings. He fiddles with things when we visit our friends, and it gets embarrassing in restaurants." Doctors say that with a little tact and discipline, these problems can be minimised. Start disciplining the child at home, says Dr Malliah. "Never spank the child. Explain nicely that she or he shouldn't do that. Most kids role play what parents do, so you also need to be aware of what you do."

Other than that, make some ground rules that are clear to the child. "No child is born with manners. If she or he is hitting someone or needlessly in the habit of fiddling with things, or running around in a restaurant, nicely tell him or her to stop." Or else, try and distract him or her with a toy or a story.

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## FLYING CHILD

■ Get on the plane first and off the plane last to get a better chance of assistance from the cabin crew.

■ Look out for fast track customs and immigration check points.

■ On some airlines the cabin crew will prepare the change table in one of the toilet cubicles for you if you let them know you need to use one.

■ Take your own baby food, bowl and utensils for your infant. Some airlines do have tins of baby food on board – but most likely not what your baby likes best!

■ Carry a bottle of pre-boiled water with you, and then make up the bottle in the pre-sterilised bag.

■ Pack things in see-through plastic bags, so that the security personnel don't have to rummage through everything and contaminate pacifiers, nipples, and teethers when searching your bags.

■ Younger babies (under 6 months) tend to sleep on planes, and many are lulled by the engine noise. If your baby is awake and fussy, let him / her walk up and down the aisle for a change of scenery.

■ Bring along an age-appropriate new rattle, book, toy, or stuffed animal to keep the baby amused.

■ Book a window seat if you would like maximum privacy.

PHOTO: DEBS/CC

## TRAVELLING WITH BABY...

■ Pack enough diapers for the trip as well as bags to put dirty diapers and soiled clothes in.

■ Try to pack at least one spare outfit for every day of your trip, especially if you won't have laundry facilities.

■ Pack extra clothing for yourself and your baby in case she or he spits up on you or vomits or if a diaper leak occurs.

■ Always have a blanket with you so your baby has a cosy, soft place to lie in.

■ Bring a waterproof bib for your baby.

■ If you are bottle-feeding, carry the

PHOTO: MCT

sterilised bottles and nipples in plastic bags to keep them clean.

■ Make sure you have completed an emergency sheet for your baby, which details his or her health information as well as any medication the child requires. Also include on this sheet all relevant names and telephone numbers of family, friends and doctors.

■ Pack a small first aid kit containing pain reliever / fever reducer, Band-Aids, teething medicine, and any other supplies your baby may need.

■ Don't forget the child carrier slings, frontpacks and backpacks.

■ Pack a changing pad or mat, so you will be able to change your baby's diaper even if proper facilities are not available. You can buy disposable changing pads at supermarkets or reusable ones at baby stores.

■ Carry along a few toys to keep your baby occupied during the trip. Try to choose the not-so-noisy ones.

PHOTO: MCT



■ Carry wet wipes, a small bottle of disinfecting hand gel, baby wash and baby lotion, tissues, formula, water, and juice, extra bottles, extra nipples and sippy cups, if these

are required. Also, do not forget energy-boosting snacks to munch on.

■ Take along a car seat for safer travel by car or plane.

