

## **RHFH Birthing Kit Frequently Ask Questions (FAQ)**

### **What is the purpose of a birthing kit?**

Birthing kits are given to patients at the clinic that are in their third trimester of pregnancy. The kit helps prevent infections by providing items for a clean birth environment.

### **Do items need to be new?**

Most items should be new. If a used item is acceptable it will be noted in the description below.

### **What should go into the kits?**

#### **Blanket (Qty. 1)**

A cotton flannel receiving blanket about 36 inches square or larger. The blanket may be used to dry and clean the baby, so it should be absorbent. Blankets can be new or gently used, but should be in good condition (no stains, tears or worn fabric). Flannel fabric cut into squares is also acceptable (edges hemmed or “pinked” to prevent fraying). Haiti is a tropical climate, so the flannel should be light weight.

#### **Onesie (Qty. 1)**

A onesie or bodysuit size newborn or 0-3 months but not larger. The color does not matter; both boys and girls in Haiti dress in all colors. Onesies can be new, handmade or gently used (no stains, tears or broken snaps).

#### **Hat (Qty. 1)**

Hats can be of any construction – knit, crochet, cotton jersey, bonnet - as long as they are small. They can be new, handmade or gently used. The average birth weight in Haiti is about 5-6 pounds, so their heads are not very big, about 12 inches around. Members of your group with knitting, crochet or sewing skills may want to focus their efforts here.

#### **Umbilical tape/ties (Qty. 2)**

Umbilical tape is used to tie off the cord before cutting. Each piece of tape should be 100% cotton about 1/8th inch wide and 10-12 inches long. It must be flat like a ribbon to prevent cutting into the skin. This is by far the hardest item to find and requires the most lead time. Most medical supply companies only carry individual, sterile umbilical tapes. They are much more expensive and probably not worth the cost since they won't stay sterile when they get used. So, look for “rolls” of umbilical tape. Lori has confirmed that umbilical tapes from veterinary supply companies are perfectly acceptable.

#### **Bar soap (Qty. 1)**

Anything from full size bars to hotel size soaps is acceptable. They should be individually wrapped or hand wrapped in paper to keep them from rubbing against other items in the kit.

#### Alcohol prep pads (Qty. 8)

Alcohol prep pads should be individually wrapped. The large size is preferred, but medium is ok. The alcohol prep pads you find in stores near diabetic supplies are usually the “medium” size pads.

#### Gauze (Qty. 6)

Look for 2”x2”, 4-ply, non-woven, sterile, individually wrapped gauze (sometimes called sponges). Two per package is common and also acceptable.

#### Underpad/drape (Qty. 1)

Underpad or “chux” pad size 30”x36” or 36”x36”. These can be found near incontinence supplies. A “medical drape” is also acceptable. It should have a waterproof side.

#### Razor blade (Qty. 1)

A #10 scalpel blade is preferred (handle not required). The blade should be sterile and individually wrapped.

You can use single-edge razor blades, but if they are not already sterile you should clean or sterilize them yourself. Stainless steel blades can be boiled for 20 minutes, cooled and wrapped in paper. Test your stainless steel blades to ensure they do not rust. Carbon steel blades should be \*thoroughly\* cleaned with rubbing alcohol and wrapped in paper. (Boiling carbon steel will result in rust forming.)

#### Exam gloves (Qty. 1 pair)

Size medium. It doesn’t matter if they are latex, vinyl, nitrile, powdered or un-powdered.

#### Hand sanitizer (Qty. 1)

A travel size or 2 oz. bottle is a good size. Check the lids to make sure they are secure. Scented or moisturizing hand sanitizers are ok. Buying in bulk and repackaging into smaller bottles is acceptable. Make sure to label the bottle in English or Haitian Creole.

#### Belly binder (Qty. 1)

A belly binder is a strip of 3”x20” woven cotton fabric. The binder is wrapped around the babies belly to hold a piece of gauze over the umbilical cord while it heals. This is not something you can buy. You just have to make them from cotton muslin (pre-washed) or clean cotton bed sheets. Leaving the edges raw is fine. A queen-size flat sheet will make about 100 strips. Used sheets are fine as long as they are clean and the fabric is not worn.

#### Safety pins (Qty. 2)

The regular sized (1-1/16 inch) pins are fine. Reusing pins, say from the dry cleaner, is perfectly fine as long as they are clean and not rusty.

#### Maxi pads (Qty. 3)

Maxi pads should be fragrance-free. Maternity and incontinence pads are also acceptable.

#### Gallon zip-top bag (Qty. 1)

A one gallon, zip-top bag. Freezer weight bags without a “zipper” seem to hold up best. If you are using full size soaps or 36” square underpads, consider using a 2 gallon bag.

### Small zip-top bags (optional, Qty. 1)

Some of the smaller items like umbilical ties, safety pins and razor blades are easily lost. A small zip-top bag is helpful to keep them together. Look for 3"x4" 'bead bags' in the beading section of the craft supply store. Snack bags or pill bags from the pharmacy would also work.

### **Why do you use belly bands? Isn't it better to leave the umbilical cord uncovered?**

Generally, it is recommended to leave the umbilical uncovered. However, in Haiti it can be difficult to keep the area clean. The belly band technique has been used for several years in Haiti and is a culturally accepted practice. We just make sure they don't pin it too tight.

### **What if I want to substitute an item?**

Some items can be substituted, such as maternity pads in place of maxi pads, but try to stick as close as you can to the items that have been published. These items are culturally acceptable and the recipients recognize them and know how to use them. If you substitute an item, the recipients may not know what it is and won't be able to read labels written in English.

### **Can I include hand sanitizer that has expired?**

No. Haitian customs officers can reject items if they find expired packaging.

### **Should the kits be gender neutral?**

The kits can be boy, girl or gender neutral. Haitians tend to dress in all colors regardless of gender.

### **Should I take off the tags and prewash new items?**

You do not need to remove tags or prewash anything. The ladies may appreciate knowing the items are brand new. If the tags or packaging make the item too bulky to pack, then take them off.

### **How should the kits be assembled?**

Put all the items into the gallon zip-top bag. Arrange the items as best as you can so that all of the individual items are visible. Package the kits as flat as possible and squeeze out any extra air to make them more compact for shipping.

### **Can I include a card or note?**

Yes! The ladies would love that. Include a picture of your group is a nice touch. Keep in mind Haitians speak Creole, so use an online translator to convert your message into their language.

### **How do I get my kits to Haiti? Why can't I just mail them?**

Contact Real Hope for Haiti via the contact page on their website. They can help you find the best way to get the kits to Haiti. Haiti doesn't have a national postal system like you might expect. The options available are expensive and RHFH must pay customs fees on packages you send to them. It is more economical to send lots of items via shipping container. Coordinating a shipping container takes time, money and resources. Depending on what country you are shipping from there may be additional customs considerations. RHFH would prefer you contact them to make sure your stuff gets where it needs to be. They may also know of someone traveling into Haiti that could carry-on items they need right away. Please consider including a monetary donation to help cover shipping or baggage fees.