

RHFH Layette Kit Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the purpose of the layette kits?

Layette Kits are given to moms when they bring their newborn baby in for a check-up at the clinic. The kit provides an incentive for mother and baby to be seen at the clinic and gives health workers an opportunity to discuss infant care and breastfeeding; similar to information women would receive in a modern hospital. The kit provides the mom with items needed to care for her baby. In extreme cases, the kit can also provide a psychological boost for the mother. Caring for an infant while experiencing poverty can be difficult. Mothers can become discouraged and depressed if they aren't able to properly care for their babies. These kits give moms items they need and can help moms be proud of themselves and their babies.

Do items need to be new?

No. Items can be new, handmade or excellent used condition. For our purposes “excellent used condition” means no stains, no pilling or “fuzzies”, all zippers and snaps are in working order, no buttons or snaps are missing. Once washed, it should be difficult to distinguish the new items from the used items.

What should go into the kits?

Baby Blanket (Qty. 1)

This is a blanket that is bigger and warmer than a receiving blanket. Often these are hand knit or crocheted. Single layer polar fleece blankets are acceptable. Haiti is a warm climate, so the double thickness, hand tied polar fleece blankets are not necessary. Also, keep in mind this blanket will be used to wrap up all of the other items.

Flannel Receiving Blanket (Qty. 1)

This is the typical cotton flannel receiving blanket that we think of in the USA and Canada. They can be handmade. Although a pinked edge would work, remember this is a special gift, so if you can hem or bind the edges, that is preferred.

Hooded Towel (Qty. 1)

A lightweight cotton terry towel, usually square. They do not need to have the hood; you can substitute a regular bath towel if necessary.

Face Cloths (Qty. 2)

Baby wash cloths are made of a terry cloth that is finer and softer for baby's sensitive skin.

Cloth Diapers (Qty. 4)

Multi-sized, fitted diapers with a waterproof outer layer are preferred. Commercially made diapers are admittedly expensive, and used ones are hard to find. If you have sewing skills, this is probably where you will want to concentrate your effort. Thanks to Joanne Cottrill a pattern and instructions are available for download from RHFH. Feel free to use other patterns you may have. The diapers should have an adjustable size that can be changed as the baby grows, any Velcro used can be folded back on itself or covered for washing and the diaper has a waterproof layer. Traditional flat “tri-fold” diapers can be used to fill out the kits as long as you include plastic pants and extra diaper pins. Disposable diapers should not be used.

Diaper Pin (Qty. 1)

A large, safety-style diaper pin usually found with a colored head. It will be used to secure all the items inside the large blanket so it is important that it be strong and for the pointy end to be covered when closed.

Outfits (Qty. 4)

Outfits should be size newborn to 3 months, and should not be larger than 3 months. A good rule of thumb is to include two onesies, one sleeper and one outfit. At least one item should be size newborn and one sized 3 months. The sleepers should be summer weight but warm. Heavy fleece sleepers are not necessary in Haiti.

Hat (Qty. 1)

Hats can be of any construction – knit, crochet, sewn, bonnet - as long as they are small. 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 knit or crochet skills may want to focus their efforts here.

Socks or Booties (Qty. 1 pair)

Socks should be sized newborn to 3 month. Booties can be handmade.

Toy with Toy Clip (Qty. 1)

A plastic, washable toy is best, but plush toys are also acceptable. The toy should be age appropriate for an infant. The toy clips keeps the toy from falling on the ground and getting dirty or lost. Pacifier clips can be used, or clips are easy to make by using pacifier clip instructions and extending the tether piece to 12-18 inches.

Baby Bib (Qty. 1)

Any style of bib is fine.

Zip-top Bag (Qty. 2)

Quart-sized (medium) zip-top bags. The freezer weight seems to work well as they are a little stronger. One bag will be used for the baby wipes, the other bag will be used for hygiene items to protect the kit from leaks.

Wipes (Qty. 25-30)

Put 25-30 pre-moistened baby wipes into a quart sized (medium) zip-top bag. Admittedly, the wipes will not last long for day-to-day use, but are very handy if mom and baby need to travel away from home. The bag should be labeled with a Haitian Creole label. (See “Labels in Haitian Creole” below.)

Hygiene Items for Baby (Qty. 1 each of diaper cream, baby shampoo, baby wash, baby lotion)

Hygiene items should be slightly larger than travel size (about 2.5 - 3.5 oz. or 70-100 ml). Bars of baby soap can be substituted for baby wash. It is perfectly acceptable to purchase items in bulk and divided them into smaller containers. Any kind of leak proof container is acceptable. Each item should be labeled in Haitian Creole so moms know what is in the bottle (See “Labels in Haitian Creole” below). Items should be put in a quart size (medium) zip-top bag to prevent leaks.

Labels in Haitian Creole

A printable document with labels for hygiene items written in Haitian Creole is available for download from RHFH. They are formatted to print on standard address labels. Before printing labels, consider the type of ink your printer uses. Inks that don't smear when they get wet are preferred.

Gift Tags in Haitian Creole

A printable document with gift tags written in Haitian Creole is available for download from RHFH. Printing on heavy cardstock works best; plain paper tags tear too easily.

What if I want to substitute an item?

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 the labels.

What about expired products?

Haitian customs officers can reject items if they find expired products. That said there are some products like diaper cream that may still be ok to use after their expiration date. In the case of diaper cream, check with your pharmacist. If it is still ok to use for many months, and you are repackaging into smaller containers, it should be ok.

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. However, those with baby girls really like the "girly" outfits.

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?

You can package them however you like as long as they are compact and secure.

Typically, the kits RHFH gets are assembled as follows:

Lay the baby blanket out flat diagonally. On top of that, layout the receiving blanket, then the towel. Tuck the face cloths into the hood of the towel. Lay the diapers in the center, add the outfits in two stacks, put a bib on one of the outfits, add the hat and socks, attach the toy to one of the outfits, set the hygiene pack and the wipes on top. Wrap the corners of the blanket over the kit and tuck tightly. Use the diaper pin to attach a gift tag and secure the bundle closed. A video showing the assembly process is available at RHFH.

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 take items they need right away. Please consider including a monetary donation to help cover shipping or baggage fees.