



Are smart bassinets good for your baby?

By Dr. Brigitte Jason PT DPT PCS

There are many popular smart bassinets designed to replace traditional ones on the market. However, as a pediatric physical therapist, I have concerns about how they may be affecting our babies' development.

There is nothing better than a baby that sleeps through the night, but at what cost? For those of you who may be unfamiliar with smart bassinets, they all have different features. Many of them often come with a hefty price tag (some are over \$1600). But, I have yet to find a sleep deprived parent that has complained about the investment if it means a good night's sleep. However, as a pediatric Physical Therapist I'm seeing the secondary effects that these devices may be causing.

As a mother of a toddler myself, I know how you feel. Sleep deprivation is the worst. I have had friends who, in desperation, have rented one of these devices just to get a good night's sleep. Here is why I wouldn't recommend it. I don't want a baby in any device that restricts their movement. It's just not natural. I like to call these devices "containers". I understand that are necessary, but when using a container, I recommend limiting use to 20 minutes at a time. These devices also include swings, activity centers, floor sitters, and car seats (when not in the car). If a store can make money on a baby item, they will make it- even at the expense of your child's development.

How is your baby going to learn to move when they are pinned down with their arms at their sides for 8+ hours a night? This is not a natural position for babies to sleep in. Traditional swaddles are only recommended for the newborn stage until baby shows any signs of rolling. Some of these smart bassinets are recommending use for up to 6 months of age (or until baby gets on hands and knees). This is far too long to have a baby in a restrictive sleep position. By limiting their movement in a bassinet, we are limiting self-exploration for the time they are in bed. This includes foundational motor skills like turning onto their sides, hands to mouth, hands to feet, rolling, reaching, tummy time, and more. Before you make your purchase do your research and/or reach out to a professional to find what is best for you and your baby.

Always follow safe sleep guidelines when putting a baby in any device to sleep. If you need a reminder of what these are: <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/>. Only use devices according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Dr. Brigitte Jason is the owner of Pediatric PT Boston LLC. www.pediatricPTboston.com. She is a Doctor of Physical Therapy and a Board Certified Pediatric Clinical Specialist. She lives in Dedham with her husband and 2 daughters.