

New kid on THE BLOCK

BEFORE DECIDING TO START A FAMILY, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE COSTS INVOLVED WITH HAVING CHILDREN? SOME MAY SURPRISE YOU.
BY GLYNIS HORNING



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Having a baby is one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences in life, but it's also one of the most expensive. From the moment the pregnancy stick shows positive to the day your child graduates, you will be spending. And often, long after that too.

The most recent government calculation puts the cost of raising a child for an average middle-income family at a cool R1 681 470 from birth to age 18, not including their tertiary education or the added expense of stay-at-home young adults. Where exactly does all this money go? And how can you save on some expenses?

Bill of health

Pregnant women and breastfeeding moms who are South African citizens

or permanent residents benefit from free public healthcare. Should you choose a private hospital, the average paid to a gynaecologist for a pregnant woman is around R10 725, says Discovery Reputation Manager Nozuko Basson. As for the delivery, natural birth will set you back R20 970 on average and a Caesarean section nearly R35 500 – this is if pregnancy comes naturally. Fertility treatments or artificial conception will add to costs long before having a baby is even a reality.

The medical expenses don't stop there. From birth until the age of one, the average amount paid to GPs for a relatively healthy child is R847, says Nozuko, plus R1 488 to paediatricians and R971 for medicines – that's around R3 300 just for the first year.

Saving solutions

The smartest defence against medical costs is to eat well, exercise and quit smoking and drinking the moment you decide to conceive, or discover you're pregnant. This should improve your chances of having an uncomplicated pregnancy and a healthy baby. Raise them with a healthy lifestyle.

You should put your child on your medical aid scheme straight away, which can set you back around R450 to R650 a month, but could save you thousands, says Leandi Roos, a Pietermaritzburg-based healthcare advisor. When your child turns 21, you will have to start paying adult rates or set them up with a policy of their own.

If finances tighten, consider a hospital plan only, advises Leandi.

Kid gloves

The first baby is the most expensive as you lay on the basics. Prices range enormously depending on brands and quality but, on average, you will pay about R2 000 for a pram, R2 500 for a cot, R800 for a car seat and R70 each for Babygros, says Roshni Chetty of Baby City in Durban. Factor in a

AFTER 18

Increasingly, young adults are failing to launch their professional careers until age 25 or even 30, as they struggle to pay back student loans and find work in a tight economy. Financial planner Debbie Netto Jonker suggests encouraging them to get part-time jobs or volunteer while they are studying and, unless they're paying for their university fees, to contribute at least 20% of their take-home pay to living expenses. 'If you don't need this for your own costs, invest it for your child to use later – this will teach them to budget.'

start-up set of toiletries and nursery items such as curtains, dummies, towels, bedding, bottles, a baby bath, changing mattress and more, and the outlay can top R20 000.

Then there are the ongoing monthly costs – top-ups on toiletries, formula, nappies and clothing as your darling grows, mounting to around R1 400 per month. That amount can easily increase by R1 500 when you add a childcare facility.

Cut costs

Browse second-hand shops and ask friends and family for hand-me-downs. When your child outgrows clothing, pack them away for the next baby or pass them on, suggests Cape Town-based financial planner, Debbie Netto Jonker. Also consider online shopping – it removes the temptation of impulse buying, saves on transportation costs and is often more convenient.

Don't think you need everything the baby catalogues show you either – an old table or chest can serve as a compactum and bathing baby in a washbasin or normal bath is perfectly acceptable. The biggest cost can be nappies, so look out for specials and buy in bulk whenever possible.



Smart money

According to research conducted by DirectAxis financial services, schooling for a child from age six to 18 amounts to around R450 000, including tuition, learning materials and school uniforms, which can cost a tidy sum (see 'Boys vs Girls' below).

Every parent wants to give their children the best possible foundation in education and this will set you back about R3 000 a month for preschool, excluding stationery, extramural activities, toiletries and often meals. Later, a former-Model C primary or secondary school will cost around R30 000 a year.

Even the small things like haircuts, compulsory for most schoolboys, all add up.

University is around R40 000 a year (R100 000 if factoring in residence and books) at today's rates, never mind what they'll be in 18 years' time.

Back to school

A few simple ways to cut back on unnecessary expenses include making school lunches rather than handing out tuck-shop money and cutting their hair at home.

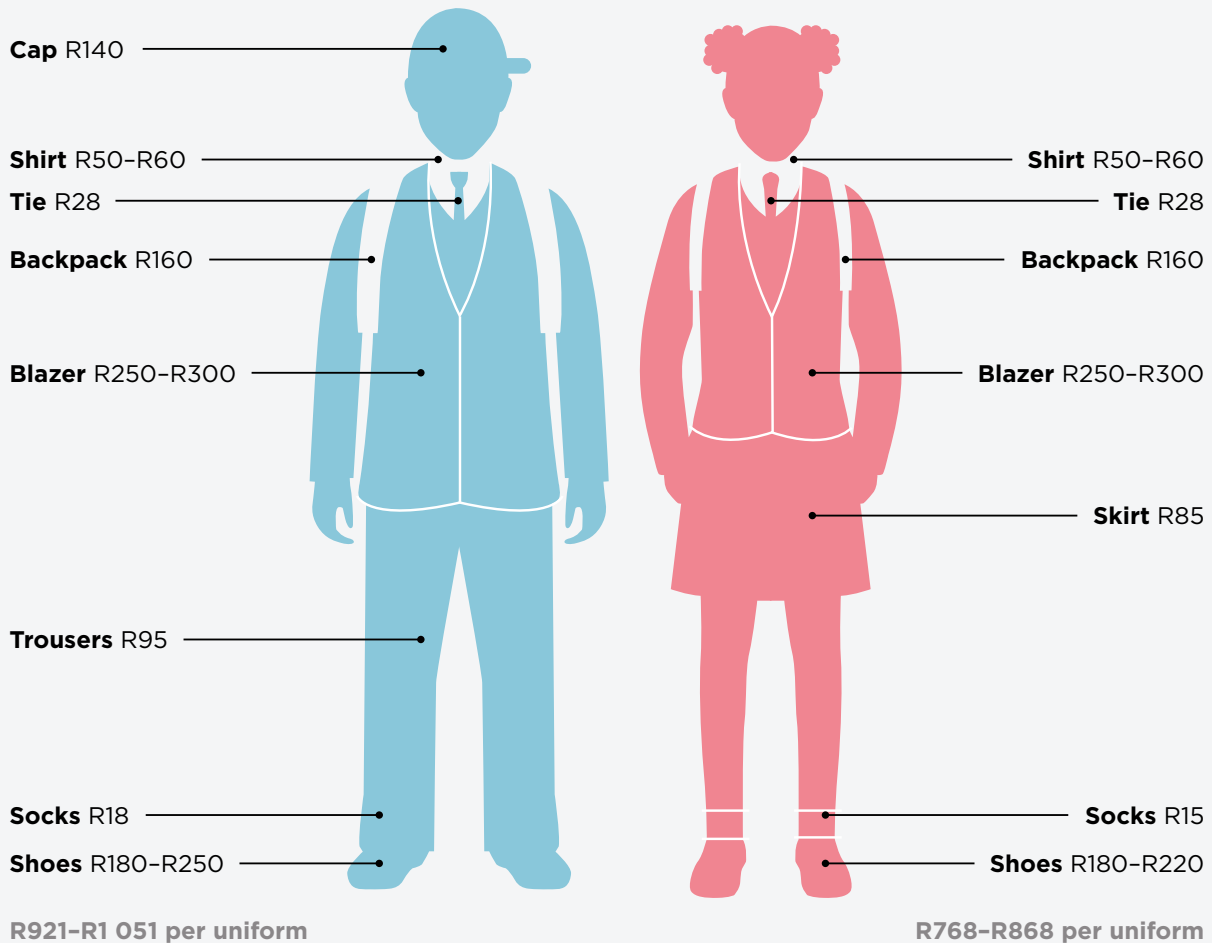
Expensive private schools aren't necessarily the only choice for your child's education. 'Send your kids to

government schools and then get involved in making the whole school better, rather than just your child,' suggests business coach Mariane Vorster. Joining the governing body and offering up your time to help is a cost-effective way to monitor, as well as improve on, the standard of your child's education.

Teach your child to appreciate and take care of their belongings; this could hopefully save you a few replacement uniforms. Also, giving them the time and attention they require to excel at school may just lead to a bursary for tertiary education. **LS**

BOYS vs GIRLS

PRIMARY SCHOOL UNIFORM COSTS*



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