

## Cloth Nappy Fact Sheet

Modern Cloth Nappies have greatly improved since the day of white terry towelling squares. These days cloth nappies come in a wide range of materials and styles to suit all bottoms and budgets-and the best part is, they are simple to use, breathable, leak proof and they care for baby and the environment.

### Some Environmental Facts:

- In a home with one baby using disposables, 50% of the household's waste will be nappies.
- 6.1% overall of Wollongong LGA residents waste to landfill is disposable nappies, making nappies the highest single item going to landfill.
- A survey conducted in 2009 showed Australian babies used 2.1 billion nappies per year—about 5.6 million per day.
- Disposable nappies take up to 400 years or more to break down. This means that all disposable nappies ever used are still sitting intact in landfill.
- Biodegradable/compostable nappies do not break down if placed in garbage/landfill. They will only break down in compost heap. (would be a VERY large heap!)
- Disposable nappies use 2.3 times more water to produce than what it takes to wash cloth nappies for one year.
- Home washed reusable nappies use less energy over the lifecycle than any other nappy system

### Cloth Will Save You Money!

It costs a family approx. \$4000 to have a child in disposable nappies from birth to toilet training. Using modern cloth nappies costs around \$850 or less. (Some quality nappies are as low as \$170 for a complete set)

### The Modern Cloth Nappy

Modern Cloth Nappies can come in 100% organic, natural fibres, or a mix of natural and synthetic fibres. Any nappy consists of 3 layers. Each layer is made from a fabric designed to perform a particular function.

Innermost Layer - Nappy Liner

Middle Layer - Absorbent Material, which is adjustable to suit baby's needs

Outside Layer - Waterproof Material

### Nappy Sizing

Most modern cloth nappies now come in a One-Size-Fits-Most style. These are ideal, as they will fit your baby from around 4-5 kgs right up until toilet training age. Most reputable brands come with a guarantee to last at least two children (up to 6 years of use or more)

### Laundering

#### Dry Pailing

1. At each nappy change, discard solid waste into the toilet. Then put the nappy into a dry bucket (with a lid) or dry pedal bin.

2. Every 2nd or 3rd day (depending on your nappy supply) put the nappies in the washing machine and put them through a normal wash using ½ the amount of powder that would be used for a similar sized load. (You may pre-rinse if preferred, either by hand or in the machine)

3. Hang them in the sun to dry. The sun naturally bleaches stains and sanitises your nappies. In bad weather, simply hang the nappy shell on a clotheshorse inside, they will dry overnight. The absorbency liners can be placed in the dryer if necessary.

Note It is recommended not to leave very wet nappies in a dry pail for more than 2 days as the elastic may be affected by the urine.

#### How Do You Discard Solid Waste?

Solid waste belongs in the toilet regardless of what type of nappy system you choose (even disposables!). The 3 easiest ways of discarding solid waste into the toilet in an environmentally friendly manner are:

1. Disposable Nappy Liners

These are placed inside the nappy closest to the babies skin. They allow moisture to pass through to the absorbent layers of the nappy and they 'catch' the solid waste. When the liner gets soiled, simply shake any solids into the toilet, and dispose of the liner in the bin. (Note: These liners will break down in landfill)

2. These are placed inside the nappy closest to the babies skin. They are usually made from microfleece or polar fleece. Solid waste just rolls right off the fleece. These are easily made, just cut a piece of polarfleece to size, no need to sew!

### 3. The Little Squirt

The Little Squirt is a simple hose that attaches to your existing toilet water supply tap (no plumber needed) allowing you to squirt the nappy's contents straight into the toilet bowl with no mess, no fuss. The trigger is fitted with a tamper proof system so toddlers can't get up to mischief!

**The Good News! After talking with a lot of mums who changed to cloth after using disposables, they were unanimous in their opinion of how much extra time it takes to use cloth, vs. disposable. Less than 10 mins a day!**

**The down-side of cloth. As cloth nappies don't contain all those chemicals that help make disposables so absorbent, you will need to change cloth nappies more frequently. However, babies who wear cloth are generally quicker and easier to toilet train.**

### Where to Purchase?

Cloth nappies are still predominantly purchased on line. A search of cloth nappies will reveal a multitude of companies. They can range in price from \$3 per nappy (buying direct from off-shore on e-bay etc), right up to \$40 or more per nappy (from Australian distributors). You may find them in some baby shops and local markets. Look for nappy hire businesses in your area, a great way to try before you buy.

A couple of things to look for when purchasing are; built in waterproof liner PUL, supplied with absorbency liners/boosters, OSFA (if preferred), double gusset or adjustable leg elastic.

### How Many Will I Need?

To use cloth nappies on a full time basis, you will need between 24 and 30 (depending on how often you plan to wash).

Some people choose to use cloth nappies on a part-time basis only. For example, they may use disposables overnight, or when out and about. It's also an easy way to ease in to using cloth, gradually increasing usage as you gain confidence and build up your collection of nappies.

### Health Benefits of Cloth Nappies

There is no significant difference in the rates of nappy rash between babies wearing disposables and babies wearing cloth nappies. The most important factor in avoiding nappy rash is changing nappies promptly when soiled. When speaking to parents who have changed from disposables to cloth, there was no increase in nappy rash. Many commented that nappy rash conditions actually improved. (1)

Research into the long term health impacts of different nappy types is in its infancy. Areas of concern include the absorbent gels in disposables (2), raised scrotal temperatures (3), the contamination of plastics with TBT (tributyl tin) (4,5), chlorine.

An independent study done in 1999 has shown that the airborne emissions of some disposable nappies can produce acute respiratory toxicity, including asthma like reactions, in normal laboratory mice. The researchers suggest that further study is required into a possible link between disposable nappies and the increasing prevalence of childhood asthma.(6)

### The Myths..

1. There is no significant difference in the rates of nappy rash between babies wearing disposables and babies wearing cloth nappies. The most important factor in avoiding nappy rash is changing nappies promptly when soiled.
2. The environmental impact of disposables is much higher than for cloth even when the energy and water waste of washing and drying cloth is taken into account.
3. The new varieties of reusable nappies and even a good traditional flat nappy system can be user friendly.
4. Even if you only use cloth nappies some of the time, for example during the day or at home only, you are still reducing a significant amount of waste.

- (1) 7 Philipp R, Hughes A, Golding J. Getting to the bottom of nappy rash. ALSPAC Survey Team. Avon Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood. Br J Gen Pract 1997;47:493-7.
- (2) Reingold AL. Toxic shock syndrome: an update. Am J Obstet Gynecol 1991;165:1236-9.
- (3) 1 Patsch C-J, Aukamp, Sippell WG. Scrotal temperature is increased in disposable plastic lined nappies. Arch Dis Child 2000;83:364-8.
- (4) Greenpeace. Greenpeace calls on parents to return contaminated nappies to producers: new tests show that TBT-free nappies are a rarity.
- (5) Press Release 19th May 2000 [www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org). 5 Women's Environmental Network. Press Release 300700. 30th July 2000 [www.realnappy.com](http://www.realnappy.com).
- (6) Anderson, R & J. (1999) Acute Respiratory Effects of Diaper Emissions. Archives of Environmental Health, 54(5)353-8.