

Cloth vs Disposable Nappies

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These days Mums have a plethora of nappy options available to them. Gone are the days of terry nappy squares and awkward pins - modern mums can now use fitted nappies, all-in-ones, pocket nappies or stuffable nappy pants.

Similarly, disposables also come in a range of user-friendly options, brands and prices. From eco-friendly to budget disposables, there's an option to suit every baby.

But what about the wider ethical and environmental implications of using disposable nappies? In these days of heightened environmental awareness, more mums are seeking an alternative to disposables, but how do they stack up against cloth? Which is cheaper and better for the environment? Is there a happy medium?

The following article helps to shed some light on this issue. "The True Cost of Disposable vs Cloth Nappies" (by Lucy Jewson)

Abstract: So what is the true cost associated with disposable vs cloth nappies? This article looks at the different factors associated with making the choice between disposable or re-usable nappies. These include: cost to the environment, cost to health and cost to your pocket. Certainly plenty to think about!

On the environment...

They call them disposable nappies.....never was a product so inappropriately named! You can't flush or compost them, they collect in landfills - where they remain for up to 500 years. It's a frightening fact that every "disposable" nappy that has ever been made is still sitting, intact, in a landfill somewhere. Is this the legacy that we want to pass on to our children?

Britain throws away 8 million nappies A DAY! That is 3 billion a year! They make up 4% of all the UK's household rubbish - and 50% of all the rubbish in a one-baby family. Not only that, 5 million trees are felled every year just to keep UK babies in disposable nappies.

... 3.5 times more energy than cloth nappies ...

Single Use Disposable Nappies Use:

• 3.5 times more energy than cloth nappies

• 8 times more non-renewable resources

• 90 Times more renewable resources

• 60 times more solid waste than washable nappies

On top of that the raw sewage that leaks from the disposable nappies in landfill sites can contain potentially harmful viruses and may result in the contamination of groundwater and soil.

On your baby's health

A study conducted at Kiel University in Germany in 2000 showed that the temperature inside disposable nappies was up to 5 deg. centigrade higher than in cloth nappies. It was suggested that for boys particularly, this could endanger future fertility as the semen-producing function is developed in the first 2 years of life, and is dependent on the testicular region being kept reasonably cool.

The chemical which makes disposable nappies so efficient is called sodium polyacrylate. This is a super-absorbent powder which, when it becomes wet, swells into a gel. You can sometimes see clear crystals of sodium polyacrylate on your baby's bottom when you change a nappy. There are many doubts over the safety of sodium polyacrylate: not least amongst which is its creation of an illusion of dryness which could encourage the nappy (and its contents) to be left in place for longer than advisable, in conditions which are bacterially ideal for the growth of infection.

Other health concerns around disposable nappies include the fact that the wood pulp used in them is bleached using dioxins which are highly toxic chemicals known to cause liver damage, immune system suppression and genetic damage in animal studies.

On your pocket

For every \$1 spent on disposables, it costs the taxpayer 10c to dispose of them! The total national cost of this is \$40 million a year.

... a cloth nappy system will cost you approximately \$400 from birth to potty. That's a saving of up to \$800!!! ...

Disposables come with a birth to potty price tag of up to \$1200, that is based on average nappy use being 2.5 years. Even when laundry costs are factored in, a cloth nappy system will cost you approximately \$400 from birth to potty. That's a saving of up to \$800!!! These savings are also increased when you use the same nappies on a second or even third child.

There are so many reasons that cloth nappies are a better option for your baby, not least that most washable nappy parents find that they actually PERFORM better than disposables too!

Further Reading...

NappyCino - Australian site for WAHMs and others interested in cloth nappies. Advice, articles, reviews and business directory

Clothnappy.com - Australian site with heaps of great articles and a very helpful FAQ page

All About Nappies - very comprehensive Australian information site with a great links page!

The Nappy Lady - UK site with good 'Information' page

Diaper Decisions - US site with good info and organiser of the Great Down Under Nappy Hunt - win great prizes!

The Nappy Network - NZ cloth nappy site - good info, forum and stockists list

Oz Cloth Nappies - EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT Site! Great online video about cloth nappies!

Modern Nappies - Australian site with good info and links