

I've heard there are some supposedly toxic materials in disposable nappies. Is that true?

Contributed by Gabrielle Edwards

Most disposables, even eco-brands have an outside layer which is made of polypropylene, laminate fabric, plastic or some other derivative. Because this does not touch the skin, health and safety concerns are minimal. Of more concern is the non-biodegradability of these materials in the environment.

There has been some concern raised about the safety of Sodium Polyacrylate Gel Crystals (the absorbency material in nappies). It is generally considered to be safe, but many Mums are reluctant to use disposables for this reason. Tushies are the only eco-disposable which uses oxygen-bleached woodpulp and chlorine-free cotton as absorbency materials in their nappy.

Some manufacturers also use artificial fragrances or lotions either in their nappy or on the liner against baby's skin. There is a multitude of literature available which points to a link between the chemicals used in these fragrances and adverse health effects such as cancer, endometriosis, hormonal and fertility problems and congenital abnormalities in newborns. It is best to avoid such products. It is also interesting to note that Huggies has removed the fragrance in their girl's nappies as a response to these health concerns.

Finally, all supermarket brands, except for the more reputable eco-disposables such as Moltex, Bambo Nature and Tushies, all use materials which have been bleached with chlorine. This bleaching process creates toxic 'dioxins' which then leach into our bodies and the environment causing serious damage to our organs and affecting the food chain. Dioxins have been banned in some countries. Bleached products are also best avoided.