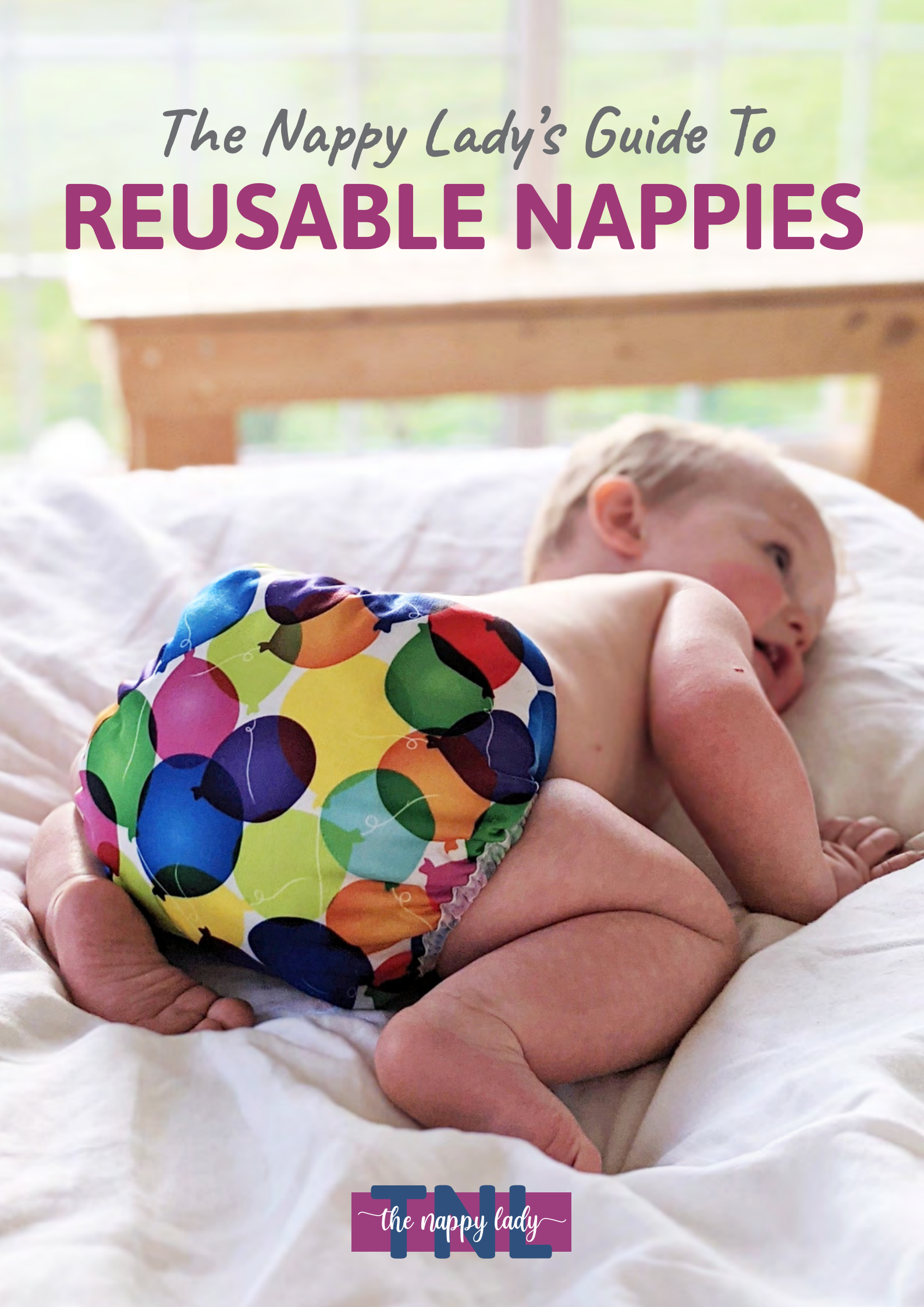


The Nappy Lady's Guide To
REUSABLE NAPPIES



Where should I start?

If you haven't already, use our free **advice service**. Our questionnaire takes a few minutes to complete and you'll be sent a personal recommendation from The Nappy Lady.

Our advice service has been running since 1999 and helps over 30,000 families get started every year! Our experienced advisors look at your personal circumstances and match you with the most appropriate nappies for your baby, lifestyle and budget.

We know which brands work best for which height/build of baby, which dry the fastest or are the most absorbent and can predict why something that worked for someone else won't suit you. The questionnaire is completely free, plus you'll get an exclusive discount code to use on our website.

Feeling confused?

Book a **video demo**! We offer a variety of video demos including group demos for beginners, 1:1 problem solving demos and more. Video demos are an ideal way to see a variety of nappies or chat through something with one of our advisors.



Parts of a Nappy

Nappies, whether they're reusable or single use, are made up of 3 layers. An outer waterproof layer, the absorbent material, and the part that touches the skin.

1. Wrap



2. Absorbency



3. Liner



4. Booster



Using cloth nappies is not hard, just different from using disposables. You need to bear in mind that a 'cloth nappy' will usually comprise of a number of parts: the nappy itself provides the absorbency, whilst the outer wrap (cover) provides the waterproof layer. On some nappies, these parts are all sewn together as an 'all in one', like a disposable is, and on others the parts come separately.

Inside the nappy, you would normally use a washable or disposable liner. The liner acts as a barrier to catch any poo, which can then be disposed of separately. At night, you may need to add extra absorbency in the form of a booster pad, so that the nappy will last 12-14 hours without a change. This is just a pad of cotton or bamboo: effectively an extension of the nappy.

Types of Nappy

Reusable nappies come in a variety of types. Once you know the parts of a nappy, it's much easier to understand the types, how they work, and the advantages of each.

The main types are:



Washing

Washing doesn't need to be difficult, after all we all manage to wash our clothes regularly.

Step 1.

Loading the Machine -
Washing Load Size

Load the machine no more than 3/4 full when dry - basically don't overfill it.

Step 2.

Rinse Cycle

Run a rinse or quick wash cycle without detergent. NOT a prewash but a separate rinse or quick wash cycle. NO detergent at this point.

Step 4.

Drying Nappies

Dry nappies. Ideally air dry but if you tumble only do this on low. Check that your nappies are suitable before tumbling them.

And that's it! These steps are generally more than enough basic washing information for most people, but if you would like to know more about washing then please [click here](#).

Step 3.

Main Wash Cycle

Use a long 40/60 deg wash, this should be at least 2 hours long and use lots of water. A cottons wash is usually the best option to choose. Avoid an eco wash.

Your washing machine drum should be a maximum 3/4 full of nappies, NOT full to the top.

Add a detergent recommended by your nappy brand (commonly powder rather than liquid detergent). Your detergent dose should be proportional to the size of washing load you've put in, e.g. if you have a 3/4 full drum use a 3/4 dose, half a drum load then use detergent for a half load.

NEVER any fabric softener.

Rashes

Despite the advertisers' claims, most rashes have nothing to do with wetness. Most babies are not bothered by a wet nappy at all, although some find it itchy when teething. Research shows that the type of nappy used is irrelevant as a cause of nappy rash, as this arises when stale urine comes into contact with the bacteria in poo, producing ammonia.

A child using cloth nappies may be less likely to have nappy rash, simply because the parents are usually more aware of proper cleaning of the whole nappy area.

Important things to note

Always change nappy straight after a poo. Always clean the whole nappy area, not just the genitals. Some children will simply be more susceptible to rashes than others, and it can also be quite common during bouts of teething. If baby is suffering with a rash or soreness, use fleece liners to keep baby's bottom dry and change nappies more frequently if need be.

Please be assured that it's quite normal for some babies to experience a certain amount of redness when first switching between single use and cloth nappies (as would a baby who normally wears cloth nappies but may use single use on holiday, for example). This is just a contact reaction as their skin readjusts, and usually clears after a few days in cloth nappies.

Note that not all rashes are nappy rash - if you are not sure, it is almost certainly NOT nappy rash. You will know it if/when you see it. A bit of redness may be an early sign, if left uncleaned, but is not in itself nappy rash. Consider other causes of rashes as well, such as sensitivity to washing powder, allergies, sweat rashes or thrush.

[Read our full guide to nappy rash here](#)

Fitting Guide

One of the main differences you may notice is that a cloth nappy generally sits much lower on baby's hips than a single use nappy; there should be a gap between the top of the nappy and baby's belly button.

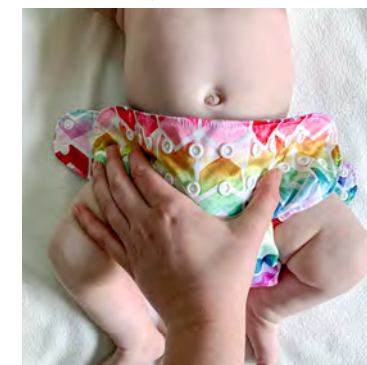
When fitting the nappy, ensure that the leg and back/waist elastic is snug against the skin, but that you can still run a finger comfortably around the elastic.

Step 1.



Feed the fabric into the knicker line

Step 2.



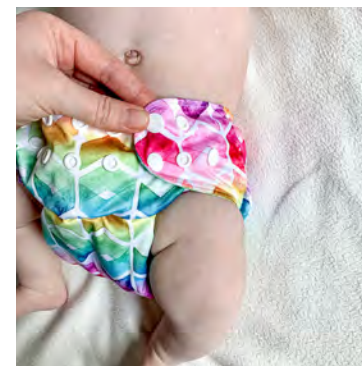
Ensure the fabric lays smooth and flat

Step 3.



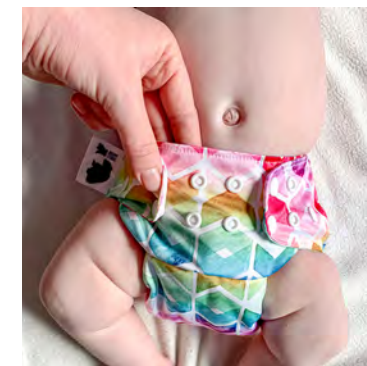
Fingers up to create a smooth line at the rise

Step 4.



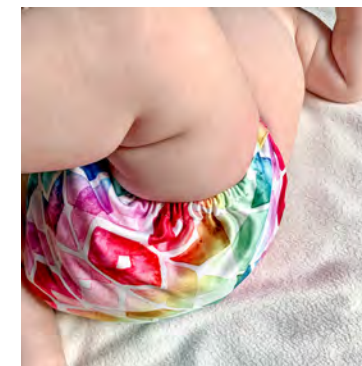
Fasten poppers

Step 5.



Check for a two finger gap

Step 6.



Legs snug, but not tight

Out and About

Many people initially continue using disposables when out and about, until they work up the confidence to take their cloth nappies with them. For some, it is a fear that you might get leaks or smells. Others just don't fancy being watched curiously while in a public changing room - all logic tells you your child would be just as much an escapologist in a disposable as in a cloth nappy, but somehow it gets you all flustered knowing that other people are watching your every move.

You may find a rucksack-style changing bag more spacious for a set of bulkier cloth nappies, as well as being more comfortable to wear on both shoulders. Alternatively a bag with loops or a long shoulder strap can be hung on a buggy handle. You can put clean nappies straight in the bag as they are, or pop them in a separate bag or pod inside the change bag.

How many nappies to take?

Start with as many nappies as you'd use at home for the same period, plus a spare for peace of mind. You may prefer to take slim, easy all in ones, or have the reliability of a two part system.

What about the dirty ones?

After changing, pop the wet or dirty nappies in a zipped wet bag, which will contain any smells and keep the inside of your bag clean. Then once you're home just empty it into the nappy bucket to be washed as normal.



Myth Busting

“They are just as bad for the environment as disposables”

It is important to note where the overall environmental impacts of cloth and single use nappies come from: with disposables it is manufacture, waste and landfill; with cloth nappies it is largely energy, water and detergents. The environmental costs of using cloth nappies can be minimised by parents in their decisions on whether to soak, wash frequency, tumble drying etc. Parents have very little control over the environmental costs of disposables.

“They make children bandy legged”

Are you or your parents bandy legged? If you were born before the late 1970's you were likely raised in old-fashioned terries. Children in cloth nappies may well walk slightly differently from their peers in disposables, and lie with legs more splayed, but they are not bandy legged. Some paediatricians argue that the extra support of a cloth nappy provides better conditions for optimal hip development, as well as spinal cushioning while the child learns to walk.

“Disposables help children walk better or sooner”

It is vaguely possible that your child may become mobile a few weeks earlier in disposables than they would in cloth, but of course it is impossible to prove. There are plenty of early walkers in cloth nappies and plenty of late walkers in disposables. The truth is, your child will walk when they are ready to, and there is no norm at all.

“Cloth nappies are hard work”

If you can wash a tea towel, you can wash a nappy. What's the difference? There's no need to soak or boil nappies as our parents may have done. Modern cloth nappies do up with velcro, poppers or nappy nippas, and they are shaped just like disposables. You may need to put on a separate waterproof wrap, but this is no different to dressing a child in a vest with a T-shirt on top. Then it's up to you whether you just fling the nappies in the nappy bucket or rinse them out first, whichever suits your own temperament.

“Wetness causes nappy rash”

If this were true, all children in cloth nappies would have nappy rash and no children in disposables would do. Even disposable nappy manufacturers admit that over 50% of children (including those in disposables) have nappy rash at any one time.

Source: European attitudes survey by Kimberley-Clark, 2000

“Nappy buckets stink”

Nappy buckets are lidded, and any poo in the nappies is flushed down the toilet before they go in the bucket, so there is absolutely no reason for there to be any smell outside the bucket. The nappy bucket will normally be emptied every 2nd or maybe 3rd day - unlike a binful of faeces-filled disposables sitting there for up to a week (two in some areas, depending on bin collection!). Check out the bin at a household using disposables if you want to know what stinky nappies are really like!

“Nurseries or childminders won't use them”

Anyone officially caring for your child is obliged to meet any reasonable request by the parents, and cloth nappies fall into this category. If a nursery seems unwilling or claims that they are not allowed to use cloth nappies, their Special Needs or Equal Opportunities policies will normally prove otherwise. Having said that, good daycare is hard to come by, and it may be necessary for cloth-using parents to compromise if they come to a serious objection. Thankfully with cloth nappy use becoming more common, more and more nurseries are becoming more familiar and accepting with them, and indeed some nursery chains promote and provide cloth nappies to the families in their care.

Do Cloth Nappies Leak?

Leaks with reusable nappies are far less frequent than with a disposable nappy. This is due to reusables having elastic around the legs and back which aids containment. The 3 most common reasons that someone might experience leaks are:

1. Fit

This is the easiest one to solve. If a nappy has gaps around the legs etc then it is prone to leaks as the wee can fall out the gap.

2. Absorbency

Some fabrics are more absorbent than others. Microfibre/polyester is a low absorbency fabric, which may not hold enough for an older toddler or heavier wetter. Choose a natural fabric for more absorbency, or simply add a slim hemp booster to any nappy to increase its capacity.

3. Washing

An unsatisfactory washing routine can easily contribute or cause leaks. For example using liquid detergent or fabric conditioner affects the absorbency and can cause materials to repel water which will cause leaks.

If you have any concerns about fit, leaks or anything else, then drop our **advice team an email** and they will be more than happy to help.

Benefits

In my opinion, no-one should ever choose reusable nappies because they have been “frightened off” disposables. You should choose them for positive reasons – and there are plenty of them.

Reliability

One thing that shocks me is how many babies in disposables suffer explosive poo – often right up to the back of the neck – and how many parents simply accept that this is what happens with nappies. With the right cloth nappy, the poo is contained where it should be: in the nappy. Nothing beats a good cloth nappy for containment, because they are a snugger fit than disposables and - if using a two part system - have both the nappy and then the wrap as separate points to stop any escape. I sometimes hear from people who think they could not move to cloth nappies because they could not cope with “even more washing”. When I talk to them some more, I find that most of that washing is caused by leaks from the disposables they are currently using, then they actually find that their total washing load goes significantly down when they switch to cloth!

Financial

At first glance the outlay for a set of reusable nappies and accessories can seem very high. However, most of the items only need to be bought once and can be reused again and again. These benefits are extended even further when used on subsequent children. Reusable nappies have a huge preloved market, this can help reduce initial purchase costs but also means you could recoup up to 50% of the initial costs if you decide to sell your nappies on.

Comfort

Anecdotal evidence only, but children who wear both cloth nappies and disposables, and who are old enough to express an opinion, often prefer to wear cloth. This makes a lot of sense, when you consider how scratchy it must be to wear what feels like paper next to your skin. I have heard of more than one “paper cut” from a disposable nappy cuff. Also, the very fact that some of the major disposables manufacturers have added lotion to the elastics, makes you wonder how uncomfortable they must have felt before.

Many families with children in disposables also routinely spend a fortune on creams and lotions to protect their bottoms. If cream is needed every nappy change, there is an ongoing problem that needs to be sorted out - which can't be comfortable for the child. Most children in cloth have no need of cream etc at all, except maybe at trigger periods such as during teething.

Health

Were you aware that cloth nappies can be better for your child's health than disposables? There is plenty of evidence, both researched and anecdotal, why this is the case:

Feeding input/output - one of the best ways of telling whether baby is feeding well, or is feeling unwell leading to a reduction in urine production, is to be aware of urine output. Where a single use nappy artificially draws moisture away, you can feel the wetness in a cloth nappy, giving you a much better idea of what/how much is coming out. Similarly carers are a little more ‘involved’ in removing faeces from a cloth nappy liner, making it easier to become familiar with what's normal for your baby and any changes.

Hip health - in babies with signs or a family history of hip dysplasia, the use of ‘double nappies’ is often prescribed to help hold the leg deeper in the hip socket. The additional bulk of a cloth nappy performs the same function, and can help support the hips in a physiologically ideal position.



Benefits continued...

Toilet training

I cannot promise you that your child will train early if they are put in real nappies – some children in cloth nappies train late, and others in disposables train early, which complicates easy statistics. However, you will usually find that when they do come out of nappies, they do so far more reliably than their peers in disposables. The average age of potty training since the introduction of disposables has started to rise: it is now 2½ in the UK and approximately 3 in the USA. 30 years ago, it was 18 months in the USA.

Children in reusable nappies do toilet train on average around six months earlier than their peers in disposables (and than they would in disposables). There is a very simple reason for this: a child in cloth nappies knows when they are wet, and so makes the connection between bladder release and a wet nappy. It is this which is the vital first step in toilet training. A child in disposables has no understanding of what is going on regarding bladder release until they can grasp it intellectually at around 18 months.

Environment

Reusable nappies use on average 1.34kg worth of plastic, compared to single-use nappies using 38.3kg.

Manufacturing a reusable nappy uses around 2.7kg of raw materials per nappy, whereas a disposable uses 150kg of raw materials such as crude oil.

Washing three loads of nappies a week uses about 200 litres of water, compared to manufacturing enough single-use nappies for a week using approximately 1,550 litres.



Because we love them!

If you already use cloth nappies, you know exactly what I'm talking about. If you use disposables, you probably think I'm making no sense! If you're not yet using anything because your baby is not yet born, you're probably confused! I really don't know what it is about cloth nappies, but the simple fact is, once you've got the right ones for your child, you fall in love with using them!

People may come to cloth nappies for any number of reasons, but unless they like using them, they won't stay with them. Not only do people stay with them, but a huge proportion of them have a burning desire to talk about them to the rest of the world. I challenge you ever to find anyone who feels like that about disposables. It simply doesn't happen. People use disposable nappies because they are a necessary part of baby care. They may or may not feel guilty about using them, but they never love them. That's why they

look at us as if we've grown two heads when we tell people how much we love our cloth nappies, or we try to work out unfeasible arrangements to take our nappies on holiday with us, even when disposables are the logical short term answer.

I have no explanation for this phenomenon, but it must be something to do with an appeal to our deeper parenting instincts. Nappy change is not some unpleasant task to be got over as soon as possible, with a nasty wrinkle to our noses and a grimace. What message does that pass on to our children about bodily functions? It is a time to spend and play with our children, tending to their basic needs in just the same way as cooking for them or bathing them does. These don't have to be chores, but shared precious moments that pass all too soon - who cares if the odd poo is involved? It won't bite!



Sources: Baba+Boo / ToisBots / TNL

the nappy lady

My advice is free to all parents without any obligation. If you decide to use cloth nappies, I do hope you will support my advice work by purchasing your nappies from The Nappy Lady. This is why I am available not only to help you make a purchase choice appropriate to your circumstances, but also afterwards for the whole period your child is in nappies. Parents come back time and again over the years to ask questions and get guidance on various nappy issues. Myself and my team help thousands of families to use cloth nappies successfully every year; we have each used reusable nappies on multiple children so between us I'm sure we've come across every nappy concern or situation possible!

I am proud of the ongoing support I offer parents and carers, and it is your purchases which make this work possible. By shopping with The Nappy Lady you are also supporting a family friendly employer who asks no questions when we need to start late after watching that special assembly. You are helping our collective 30+ children join clubs, have swimming lessons and parents to put food on the table.

The Nappy Lady Limited,
Unit C
Linsford Business Centre
Linsford Lane
Mytchett
Surrey
GU16 6DL

Telephone Number: 01252 372266
(9.30am - 2pm Monday to Friday)

Email: info@thenappylady.co.uk

Website: www.thenappylady.co.uk

The Nappy Lady Ltd [™] is
Registered in England No:
7927974