

Why use reusable nappies?

That depends on you. There are five main reasons people choose to turn to reusable nappies

Chemicals

Disposable nappies use chemicals which draw moisture away from baby's skin, this can affect the natural balance of the child's skin and in some cases leads to redness and rash. With a cloth nappy you have the choice of what goes next to your baby's skin, from microfiber to bamboo to organic cotton, you can choose whichever material works best for you and your little one.

Cost

Using reusable nappies and wipes can save you a considerable amount of money, those savings are multiplied if you use those nappies again for child two, or three... How much you save depends on the brand you buy and how long your child is in nappies

Environment

The Environment Agency published a lifecycle assessment study for disposable and reusable nappies in 2008, according to that study reusable nappies can be as much as 40% better for the environment in terms of carbon footprint as they use far fewer raw materials, in fact it is the manufacturing of disposable nappies that the Environment Agency believes has the greatest impact on the environment rather than their waste management by landfill

Waste management

Around 8 million disposable nappies are used each day in the UK, they make up around 4% of our domestic contribution to landfill. Nobody really knows how long a disposable nappy will take to decompose, estimates are between 100 and 500 years which means that all of the disposable nappies ever used are still in landfill sites.

Fashion

More and more parents are attracted to cloth nappies because of the aesthetics. Whether it is the eye-catching colours, the pretty prints or the big fluffy bum, there is no denying, they look much more attractive than their disposable counterpart.

Jargon Buster

There are so many different terms and abbreviations that new to cloth parents often find it confusing, we'll try to break it down for you here.

Fitted nappy

Fitted nappies are also known as 2 part nappy systems. An absorbent nappy that is shaped to fit baby, usually with elastic at the legs. The whole nappy gets wet in this system so don't be shocked when you first use them, you need a separate waterproof wrap keep the moisture in. A stay dry liner is advised to wick the moisture away from baby's skin.

Hybrid fitted

As above, but these have a pretty outer layer and a built in water repellent or waterproof layer meaning they can be used either with or without a wrap.

Pocket

This is a type of cloth nappy that has a waterproof outer with a stay dry inner attached (designed to wick moisture away from baby's skin to keep them dry) creating a pouch between the two layers so that you can stuff the nappy with an absorbent insert. What you choose to use inside a pocket nappy is personal preference. Most pocket nappies come with inserts but you can add extra absorbency as needed or replace the provided inserts with your choice of material.

All In One (AIO) – All in one nappies are just that. They are the most similar to disposable nappies as they do not require any stuffing of pockets and are easy enough to just pick up and go. All in ones can come in different sizes nappies and in a birth to potty style. The disadvantages are they are harder to boost if needed.

All-in-two- All in two have a snap in layer. The snap in layer can be washed separately to the outer layer so if you are out and about and you only need to change the inner layer due to wetness for example you would only need to pop in another case/insert.

Hybrid cover system-

These are waterproof covers that can be used with a variety of different inserts. The flip system is an example of this, you can have organic cotton prefolds (day and night), stay dry (microfiber with a built in stay dry layer) or disposable. This gives the parent a multitude of options and makes it very versatile.

Prefolds or flats-

Traditional terry squares or prefolds, these need to be folded to make a nappy then fastened, usually with a nappy nippa or snappi (modern replacement for a safety pin) or folded into a rectangle and lain in a separate waterproof cover. Prefolds are a great option for newborns as

they are easy to customise to the shape of your baby. Some people choose to use them for a long time but many choose different systems once baby starts to roll/crawl as they are a little more complicated than other options.

Birth to Potty (BTP) One Size fits all/most (OSFA OSFM)

Birth to Potty nappies are an all in one nappy that can be folded/snapped down to a smaller size so that you can put the same nappy on your child from about 10 lbs-potty training. They are one of the most popular types of nappies because they offer such good value for money especially if you have more than 1 child in nappies at the same time.

Booster- A piece of fabric you can add to a nappy to make them more absorbent. There are many different types of boosters the most common types of boosters are bamboo, hemp, charcoal and microfibre.

Liner- Liners are used to catch poo and in some cases wick moisture away from the child. There are reusable and disposable liners available. Reusable liners are usually made from microfleece or silk. Disposable liners come in a variety of types including flushable (though we don't recommend you flush any liner if you have old plumbing, potential damage from roots or trees, or a septic tank) and non-flushable.

PUL Polyurethane Laminate- This is a type of water resistant material that is laminated using a heat solvent process that is used in making many modern cloth nappies and wraps.

How many cloth nappies will I need?

The UK Cloth Nappy Library Network suggest that you will need anywhere between 12 and 40 nappies depending on the age of your child (fewer as they get older) and how often you aim to wash. A newborn would need around 30 nappies if washing every day, a child over one would only require 12 nappies if washing every day. This allows for spares in your changing bag, drying time etc. We recommend between 18-22 as a base or around 36 for twins.

They seem expensive, I thought you could save money?

Cloth nappies require an initial investment, however, when you break it down over the lifetime of your child's nappy wearing days there is a significant saving. If you calculate that the average disposable nappy costs around 15p and you change your child's nappy on average 6 times a day (more as a newborn, less as a toddler) over 2.5 years (base on the Environment Agency's estimate that most children potty train after 30 months) this gives you a figure of £821.25. A cloth nappy on average costs around £15, if you have a rotation of about 25 nappies your initial outlay would have been £375, you still need to factor in washing costs, so if you wash twice a week at 45p a wash, that's £117. Add that to your initial outlay and you get a figure of £492. That gives you a saving of £329.25. There is also a healthy preloved market in cloth nappies so your initial outlay can be partly recouped, or if you go on to use your nappies again with further babies you really see the savings mount up.

What do I do when I am out?

Most cloth bum mums and dads use a small wet bag when out and about to contain used nappies. If you need to deal with solid waste you can dispose of it in a public toilet, or simply fold the nappy in two and pop it in the wet bag and deal with it at home. Some people love the option of having a disposable insert for use out and about. Flip disposables are a great option for this, and take up very little space in your changing bag as you reuse the shell and only replace the insert.

Do they slow down development?

Until fifty years ago everyone wore reusable nappies, a hundred years ago the average child potty trained at 12 months, now it is 24 months plus. Cloth nappies may look like they are a bit bulkier (before a disposable gets wet) however the position that the cloth nappies put the hips into is ideal for children. Children should have a wider supported hip stance as their body is developing especially if they have been diagnosed with "clicky hips" or hip dysplasia. When your child is mobile a cloth nappy also serves as extra padding for the many tumbles and falls on their bottoms that they will experience. Cloth nappies encourage earlier potty training as they can feel the wetness when they wet or soil the nappy more than in disposables which are designed to give baby the longest length of time without feeling the dampness.

Are they really bulky?

Some brands of reusable nappy are slimmer than others. BumGenius elemental is a great example of a nappy that is not only extremely slim, slimmer than a wet disposable in fact, but

also very absorbent. Unlike disposables, cloth nappies don't get bulkier as they are used so although they seem bulky to begin they are slimmer if not the same as a disposable in the end.

What creams can I use?

Generally, if a nappy is changed regularly enough and the skin is allowed to air dry where possible, rash can be avoided. If you do have issues with rash, We recommend not using anything that doesn't wash off your hands easily. Creams that don't wash out easily can leave a coating on the fibres of the nappy preventing it from absorbing fully. We also recommend using a liner when using any creams and be sure to rub well into the skin. As a rule of thumb, avoid anything that is paraffin or petroleum based.

I have a leak...what went wrong?

How do I wash reusable nappies? break down...

What can I boost with?

What do I use at night?

where do I keep the used ones?

What do I do with poo?

Do I need a liner?

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How do I strip wash?

I am sending my baby to nursery, will they need to be in disposables?

How often do I need to change my baby's nappy?

Can I use cloth wipes?

Do they cause nappy rash?

Generally if a nappy is changed regularly enough and the skin is allowed to air dry as much as possible then nappy rash is preventable. Sometimes rash does occur, however, this is not likely to be down to the use of reusable nappies, more commonly it is as a result of acidic teething wee or missing a dirty nappy. In such cases, follow the above advice when using creams.

How do I put them on my baby?

The nappy goes on in the same way as a disposable nappy. The only differences are that if you choose to add a fleece or disposable liner it lays on top of the nappy under your child's bottom. Things to think about are: Are there any gaps around the legs, waist including the back? The nappy should be tight enough that you can stick a finger in around the waist band and leg gussets but yet it be snug against your finger. Some red marks are ok but if the marks don't fade after a couple minutes they are too tight. If you have gaps in the leg gussets try adjusting the rise of the nappy as well.

How do I wash reusable nappies?

A cold prewash with no powder followed by a long cotton wash at 40-60 degrees with half your usual dose of biological washing powder or a powder manufactured specifically for cloth nappies. Follow this with a final rinse.

You want to use enough powder to clean your nappies, but not so much powder that a residue is left. If your nappies smell of washing powder after the final rinse you have probably used too much powder, rinse until there are no bubbles and the smell of powder has gone. Clean nappies should smell of nothing. If they don't smell "clean" after a wash then you need to use more powder.

Unless you have to use non-bio for your normal wash we advise biological powder for nappies. Biological powder uses enzymes to wash. Non-bio replaces these enzymes with other ingredients. We believe these don't wash out easily, are less effective than the enzymes they replace and can leave a residue. A residue will prevent nappies from absorbing fully and is one of the most common causes of leaks. For the same reason, liquid detergent and fabric softener is never recommended for nappies.

If you have an eco setting this reduces the amount of water used, we don't advise you use this function for nappies.

What can I boost with?

Microfibre, cotton, bamboo and hemp are commonly used in nappies and boosters. Adding additional absorbency will make a nappy last longer. However you choose to boost you should bear in mind the properties of the material you are using. A microfiber insert absorbs quickly, cotton, hemp and bamboo lock moisture away, but are slower to absorb. If using a combination of microfibre and another material, microfiber should be placed closest to the skin with the other materials closest to the PUL layer (always ensure that a stay dry layer is used with microfiber if not using in a pocket nappy as microfibre can irritate when played directly against skin). If boosting a fitted nappy you can lay the booster between the nappy and the wrap if you prefer.

What do I use at night?

Two part nappies, fitteds with wraps, are commonly used as night nappies. Using a stay dry liner will help keep your child's skin dry as this type of nappy gets wet all over. You can add more absorbency by using a booster, this can go either inside the fitted nappy, or between the nappy and the wrap. Alternatively, prefolds with wraps, such as the flip system with night insert, can be used. With both these systems the wrap does not need to be replaced at every change. So long as it isn't soiled it can be wiped and used again.

Where do I keep the used ones?

There are different two options for storing used nappies. One method is using a wet bag. These come in different sizes including ones for when you are out and about during the day and extra small ones if you choose to use cloth wipes, an extra large hanging wet bag is perfect for keeping nappies out of the way ready for the wash. The other method is using a bucket or pail with a lid. There is no need to put any water in the bucket to soak the nappies prior to washing. Some people find that having a mesh washing bag hanging in the bucket makes the transport from bucket to washing machine easier.

What do I do with poo?

Until your child starts solids poo is not an issue, it is soluble in water so you can just throw it in the machine. From the introduction of solids, however, you will need to remove poo before machine washing. Some people use liners to make it easier to remove, either way, you hold the liner or the whole nappy over the toilet and allow it to roll off. If it needs some encouragement you can hold the liner or nappy while flushing the toilet, solids should then sluice off. If you are out and about soiled nappies can be folded and placed in a wet bag until you have the chance to deal with the waste.

Do I need a liner?

You don't have to use a liner. They can be useful as a stay dry layer, to wick moisture away from the skin, if your nappy option doesn't have this built in. Some people like to use "paper" liners as they can make it easier to remove solids.

What about stains?

Stains are a common occurrence in using cloth nappies. You can reduce the chance of them happening by using liners to catch the solid waste. If you find that you do get a stain on your nappy you can wash them with a cold wash, normal wash and extra rinse then put them outside

to dry. Even on cloudy days the sun's rays will make the stains fade but obviously they will fade quicker on sunny days.

Can I use cloth nappies part-time?

Yes! You can use cloth nappies however you want. Some people only use cloth during the day, some only on days their children are not in nurseries. Remember for every disposable you don't use you save one from a landfill for the next so even doing 1 cloth nappy a day makes a HUGE impact.

What do I do on holiday?

There are many brands of cloth nappies such as the BumGenius Flip that are hybrids meaning they use both reusable and disposable inserts. There are also reusable swim nappies which like disposable nappies hold in the solid but will not retain the liquid waste. If you still feel that using cloth nappies on holiday is not for you we recommend you use something like an eco disposable which are more environmentally friendly.

What size do I need?

Nappies are often described as being sized according to weight. Birth to potty nappies can range from 8-35lbs. If the nappy is not birth to potty each brand will give a rough estimation of the weight of the baby for each of their sizes. All in one/two and birth to potty nappies usually have rise snaps so you can adjust the same nappy to fit your small baby and your nearly potty toddler

How do I strip wash?

People often talk about needing to strip wash. Often before you get to the point of needing to strip wash you need to perfect your washing routine as if you aren't washing them properly in the first place you will need to keep strip washing them because the problem won't go away. However, there is no one perfect wash routine as everyone has different machines, powder, water etc. We recommend the following routine:

- 1.
2. A cold prewash with NO powder.
3. 2. A Normal wash (40-60) with BIOLOGICAL powder unless you are using non-biological powder for other reasons.
4. Why biological powder? We believe washing powder residue causing issues, not the powder. So once fully rinsed out there should be no issue. Some bamboo manufacturers claim biological powder eats bamboo but the UK and Ireland one of the few countries worldwide to have 'non-biological powders' so it can't be that bad.
5. If you are in a hard water area you might want to try to use Eco-Sprout as it is designed to not leave a residue on your nappies.

6. 3. How much powder? This is the hard part. Washing powder is designed to leave a residue on your cloths (that lovely fresh laundry smell). It's this residue which causes the issues. How much powder depends on so many things it is impossible for me to tell you how much. But you should use enough to clean but not leave a residue. When dry, smell your nappies. They should smell of NOTHING. If you can smell laundry freshness, you have residue and it will cause issues.
7. 4. An extra rinse may be needed. If you have a super efficient machine do an extra 2 rinses or use a powder like Eco-Sprout which is designed not to leave a residue, hence why so many people find it good.
- 8.
- 9.

I am sending my baby to nursery, will they need to be in disposables?

The simplest answer is no. We would like it if all nurseries were informed enough to use them. However, if you are planning on sending your child to nursery in cloth nappies then it would be best if you use the easiest possible system. If you use pocket nappies make sure they are prestuffed and ready just to be picked up and be used. Used nappies are best if they are just put in a wetbag/bucket and taken home to be dealt with afterwards. Often if a nursery is not willing to agree to using cloth nappies in their nursery it is a problem with lack of information about how they work Try sitting down with the manager/staff and explain your expectations of them and work through their concerns.

How often do I need to change my baby's nappy?

The length of time that a cloth nappy can be worn for depends on several factors. The most common being age of child, how much and often the child soils the nappy and the style of nappy. Some nappies like the DKB Hybrid nappies are designed to last 4-5 hours without a wrap and up to 15 with a wrap while most nappies average on 2-2.5 hours. Basically, you need to change cloth nappies more than disposables but there is no exact science around how often.

Can I use cloth wipes?

Yes! Cloth wipes are easy to use, reduce your carbon footprint and go very nicely with using cloth nappies. However, you can choose to use cloth nappies without choosing to use cloth wipes as well.