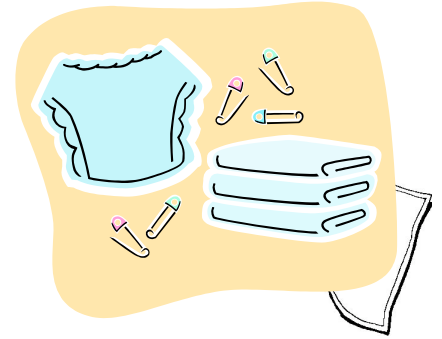


## Planning for Baby -- Diaper Choices and Comfort

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Neither cloth nor disposable diapers have been shown to be healthier for babies. The choice depends on how much time and money you have to spend on diapers. If your child will be in day care, most centers only accept disposable diapers. Studies show disposable diapers keep the baby drier and help maintain a normal skin pH. To avoid problems when using cloth diapers, you have to change the baby more often and use diaper liners.



### Disposable diapers

- Disposable (single-use) diapers are designed to fit well and hold urine.
- Disposable diapers tend to leak less often than cloth diapers covered with a plastic cover.

### Costs of disposable diapers

- Babies use an average of seven disposable diapers per day. This will decrease as the number of meals the baby eats changes and as the toddler is ready to be toilet trained.
- Cost of disposable diapers depends on the brand and the age of your child. Many stores offer generic brands which work just as well as the expensive name brands.
- There is little or no cost difference in laundering cloth diapers and buying

disposable diapers.

### Disposable diaper tips

- Empty feces into the toilet.
- Fold diapers with soiled area inside.
- Wrap in a paper or plastic shopping bag or newspaper and put with the trash to be taken out.
- Do not leave used diapers on changing tables or in public places. Always dispose of them properly.

### Cloth diapers

- Cloth diapers are usually made of cotton. A couple of other fabrics are available and are usually found through mail order catalogues.
- Size of cloth diapers can vary but usually a standard size flat style is available and you can alter the size by folding the fabric differently.

- There are also form-fitted or pre-shaped diapers available with plastic covers. The problem with these is that babies quickly outgrow one size and it is expensive to keep buying them. They also cost more than non-fitted cloth diapers and take longer to dry, therefore, making your utility bill higher.
- You may want to buy a few cloth diapers to use as shoulder protectors (burp cloths).

### **Cloth diaper tips**

- Rinse soiled diapers in the toilet.
- Collect a day's worth of diapers in a bucket containing water and a detergent. You may need to add chlorine bleach according to the directions on the bottle and the size of the diaper pail.
- For better odor control and sanitization, pour diapers and solution into the washer and put it on the spin cycle.
- Then add water and detergent (and bleach if needed) to pre-soak the diapers before setting the washer at full-cycle to wash them.
- You may not need to use bleach every time but always remember to wash the diapers in hot water.
- Fabric softener can cause the fabric not to be as absorbent. If you must use fabric softeners, use dryer sheets.
- Line-dry the diapers or dry the diapers in the dryer on the regular setting.
- Many detergents are advertised for use with cloth diapers. When shopping, check labels to see if the detergent is for cloth diapers. Other detergents will work, too, but designated detergents tend to work better.



### **Cloth diaper services**

- Depending on where you live, a cloth diaper service may be available though not usually in rural areas. Also, there are now fewer diaper services available because disposable diapers have become so popular.
- Diaper services cost more than home laundering or disposable diapers.

### **Diaper-washing basics**

Wash cloth diapers two dozen at a time every two to three days. Presoak first, using your washer's highest water level and the hottest water. Launder with a hot wash and cold rinse. Any detergent labeled free of perfume or dyes will work fine. Don't use soap. It leaves a build-up. As long as you presoak, you don't need to use chlorine bleach, which shortens diaper life. To remove stains, use chlorine-free bleach or washing soda. If your baby is prone to diaper rash, rinse diapers twice, adding three-fourths of a cup of white vinegar to the second rinse.

Don't use liquid fabric softener or dryer sheets. Your baby may have an allergic reaction to the fragrance. Fabric softener can also leave a waxy buildup on diapers, making them water-repellent instead of absorbent. (For more details, see the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission web site on baby sleepwear, <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/slpwear.html>.)

## Resources for New Parents

- Consumer Reports web site on Disposable diapers, <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/babies-kids/baby-toddler/care-and-dressing/diapers/diapers-304/overview/index.htm>
- Consumer Reports web site on Cloth diapers [http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/babies-kids/baby-toddler/care-and-dressing/diapers/cloth-diapers-4-07/overview/0704\\_cloth-diapers\\_ov.htm](http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/babies-kids/baby-toddler/care-and-dressing/diapers/cloth-diapers-4-07/overview/0704_cloth-diapers_ov.htm)

*Remember, these are the basic guidelines to get you started. As you become more comfortable and have a set routine, you will have a better idea of exactly what you will need and not need.*

This is one of a set of fact sheets called *Planning for Baby*. You may also want to see the series *Children and Family Finances*.

This fact sheet was revised from *Planning for Baby – Consumer Issues* by Hayhoe, C., Jamison, S. Dillard, A. F., and Chase, M.

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