

## GUIDE TO CLOTH DIAPERING

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### 1. Why We're Making the Switch

With all the recent media attention about global warming it's no surprise that parents with small children in diapers or potty training are starting to rethink disposable diapers. Yet, this isn't the only reason to start thinking about switching. I'm going to give you a number of reasons why cloth diapers are making a large comeback, including how you're helping the environment.

#### a) They're Environmentally Friendly

Cloth diapers are MUCH more environmentally friendly. What about the energy used to clean the diapers, you ask? This is small compared to the waste generated by disposable diapers. One child will go through approximately 6,000-10,000 diapers. Not only that, there are millions of diapers disposed of in Canada in just one day. These diapers are going into the landfill and any of the human waste that's in them is leaching into the water system. This means that animals, plants and humans are affected (you swim right?). In fact, if you look on the package of your disposable diapers, you'd be surprised to find that the companies direct you to dispose of any waste properly, i.e. down the toilet. On top of all that, Environment Canada has released a statement saying that cloth diapers "are a superior choice to disposable diapers".

#### b) Cloth is Cost Effective

I know what you're thinking, how in the world can it be more cost effective when only one diaper can cost up to \$22!?! Trust me, I thought the same way! It is, and can be, expensive to start the process. Especially when you're looking at one diaper compared to a pack of diapers. But think of it this way, that one diaper is going to be used over and over again. Not only that, if you plan on having more children it can also be used with them too! Plus, you have to factor in that your child will be in diapers for anywhere between 2-3 years or even more. That's a lot of disposable diapers. You can cloth diaper a child for as little as \$400, depending on the system that you decide is best for you. If you think about it, you're spending approximately \$2000 on one child when you buy disposables. This is huge savings AND you can use your newly acquired cloth diapers on other babies. What if you decide you don't want to keep your diapers? You can actually get an excellent price for gently used diapers. It's a win, win situation.

#### c) Cloth is Better than Ever!

These are your grandma's diapers, or even your mothers! Cloth diapers have definitely come a long way since you wore them. Now they have Velcro closures and snaps instead of pins. There are a variety of types that you can choose from to make your life easier and they come in solid colours or super cute prints. Not only that, cloth diapers are just as easy to use to disposables, and they wash like rags. You're already doing laundry every other day right? (If you're lucky!!) What's another load?

c) Your Babies Bottom Will Thank You

Disposable diapers are made with chemicals, toxins and other substances that are known to cause diaper rash on your precious little one's bottom. Not only that disposable diapers are not the most breathable pieces of clothing for your baby to wear. Would you enjoy sitting in a paper diaper all day? The cloth diapers of today have a soft inner layer that is in direct contact with your baby's bottom. Do you know how disposable diapers absorb all the wetness your baby creates? Every once in a while do you see gel-like crystals left behind from the disposable diapers? It's a chemical called Sodium Polyacrylate. You may remember seeing this back in the 80's when it was found that tampons were causing toxic shock syndrome. This chemical has also been linked to low fertility in males, chemical burns and bleeding in the perineum and scrotal tissue. Are you sure you still want to stick with those disposable diapers?

d) Quick, Easy, Reliable AND Fun

I bet I know what you're thinking, how are cloth diapers quick AND easy? You expect that changing a cloth diaper is going to be a long drawn out process, but it isn't! Today with the easy fastenings cloth diapers are just as easily removed and replaced as disposable diapers. Plus it's the same amount of time to walk to the diaper pail. The only extra step is washing the diapers, but you're doing laundry all the time anyway, it's just one more load. Now that those issues are tackled, how are cloth diapers reliable? Well, there are fewer leaks than with disposables, due in large part to the fact that you are changing more often because you can tell when a cloth diaper needs to be changed. Plus, cloth diapers are better able to handle dirty diapers better than disposables are. This is due to appropriately placed elastics and the fact that cloth holds onto messes more easily. Okay, so all that is covered, how are cloth diapers fun? Trust me, as a self-proclaimed Cloth-a-holic, it's something that you will truly enjoy. You're always looking for new patterns, colours and styles to try out. There are limitless possibilities and it really is fun to go through and see all the cute patterns.

e) Cloth Diapers Make Potty Training Easier

Cloth diapers are able to make potty training easier because children are actually able to feel the wetness whereas with disposables it gets locked away and they are unaware that anything has happened. This means you may actually decrease the amount of time that your little one is wearing diapers. That's a bonus in itself!

## 2. Getting Started

So you've decided to take the leap from disposable diapers into the world of cloth. Good for you, give yourself a pat on the back. You're now entering a whole new world of ideas and thought patterns. The cloth community is a tightly knit one. Ask any question and you'll get a whole slew of answers from people that were in the same position you're about to find yourself in. Relax and enjoy the experience, you have help at every click of the mouse from people who have been there.

I do not recommend starting like I did. I purchased a dozen diapers of the same type and brand. Little did I know, as I started trying other types and brands I found diapers that I liked more. While I don't hate my decision, I do believe that I should have tried out more options after trying different types.

Here we go; these are the general guidelines for starting down the path of cloth. Like I said though, they're only guidelines, not rules, you need to do what is right for you.

Start out by buying only a few different types and brands of diapers and trying these out. That way you can find a diaper that is right for you and your baby. There are a lot of diapers that are so easy to use that fathers and babysitters enjoy using them too! Once you have decided on a brand and type that you like and that fits your lifestyle you will need anywhere between 2 to 3 dozen diapers to start off with. Of course, you will end up with much more than this because you will have a hard time NOT buying any! This also depends on how often you want to do laundry. If you don't want to commit to a large number of diapers, 12-18 diapers is a reasonable starting point as well, but you will be doing laundry more often.

A good thing to keep in mind is that if your child gets sick, you will need the extra diapers, or you will find yourself either doing a great deal more laundry than normal or buying disposables.

### 3. Cost

The cost of starting an adventure into cloth diapering can be a big deterrent for some because it may seem like you have to spend a lot of money. However, if you decide to start using cloth diapers you are actually saving money in the end, even once you add the cost of laundering.

Let's look at an example. One child can be in diapers anywhere between 2-3 years including potty training. Plus, you may still need some added protection during the nighttime for the little accidents that happen to take place. On average, a family can spend approximately \$2000 on disposable diapers alone. Remember, that is the least amount that could be spent. You also have to factor in if you have a child that isn't feeling well, if you have a tricky time potty training and many other occurrences that can happen along the way. Keep in mind this is for **one** child. If you have twins, or decide to have other children that total can easily double or triple.

If you decided to switch to cloth diapers you can buy your diapers for a little as \$400 **and** be able to use them for any other children you may have. That's a saving of \$1800 on just

one child! Not only that, the great thing about cloth diapers is that you can use them on more than one child so your savings doubles or triples. A good thing to keep in mind when considering cost is that as your baby grows and gets more mobile they tend to become slimmer and are able to fit back into their smaller diapers again.

All that said I bet your wondering how washing diapers can be so cost effective if you're doing laundry all the time. The fact is it takes a small amount of money to do one load of laundry. Plus, for the amount of time that you're able to use your diapers you're still saving bundles of money than if you were to use disposable diapers. You can calculate your savings using this calculator.

<http://www.diaperpin.com/calculator/calculator.asp#calculator>

#### 4. Prefold, Pockets & Fitted... Oh My! Making Sense of it All

Are you feeling a bit overwhelmed by it all? There certainly is a lot to take in when you're in the process of switching to cloth diapers. I've created this section in the attempt to help you make sense of it all. I understand how you feel; I was there once too. I'm going to break it down into the different types of diapers and the accessories that you will need to use them.

##### a) Prefolds

These are your basic diapers. They are flat pieces of cloth in vary fabrics from cotton to bamboo. There are many ways to fold prefold diapers (Chinese, Indian, etc). Many just fold one side of the diaper into the middle and then the other. This creates a multi-layered absorbent core. You do need a cover with your prefolds. However, some people are able to use them with Snappi's and they work just as well.

##### b) Covers

This is exactly as it sounds. Covers are made to, well, cover your diapers. They are generally used with the prefold diapers but should be used with fitted diapers as well. They come in cute patterns and have a PUL layer on the inside to catch wetness so it doesn't get all over your baby.

##### c) Pocket Diapers

Pocket diapers are extremely easy to use. Generally the outer lining is a PUL cover with a fleece or other type of soft interior. There is an opening where you put the insert or doubler in. A word to the wise, from personal experience, if you have a girl the wide part goes to the back and for a boy it's the opposite. You'll find out very quickly if you've put the insert in the wrong way, as you'll have a very wet baby. When you change the diaper you remove the insert and place each into a separate pail. You can put them into the same pail, but separating them prolongs their use.

##### d) Inserts & Doublers

Inserts and doublers come in a few different types of fabric, much like prefold diaper. There are microfleece, microterry, hemp and bamboo. Hemp inserts are able to

absorb a lot more liquid than the other inserts making them helpful for longer periods of time such as over night. These can be used with pocket diapers and fitted diapers.

e) Fitted Diapers

Fitted diapers are made from an absorbent material such as hemp or bamboo and are trim fitting. You can add an insert for extra protection during the day or through the night. Fitted diapers will need a cover to avoid any leaking.

f) All-in-One

All-in-One diapers are very easy to use as there is no stuffing, folding or covering. They have an absorbent core sewn into the middle of the diaper. Therefore, they have everything you need in one great diaper and are easy to wash because you don't need to separate anything you just put them in the washing machine.

g) One Size Diapers

One-size diapers are great for budgeting. While the initial cost may be a bit more than other types of diapers you have the ability to purchase a smaller number of diapers because they can be used from newborn until potty training. The snaps up the front allow for the diaper to be adjusted to the size that is right for your child.

## 5. Caring for your Cloth

When you first receive your cloth diapers be sure to wash them at least once in hot water with a small amount of detergent and dry them on your dryers hottest setting. You should do this for two reasons. (1) There are many people that touch your diapers before you get them and while standards are high in the making and selling of cloth diapers it's better to be safe than sorry and (2) this helps to seal certain styles of diapers so that there is less leaking, i.e. pocket diapers.

When you first start cloth diapering, you will need a diaper pail, or 2 depending on the type of diaper that you plan to use. For pocket diapers it's best to have 2 diaper pails. There are 2 methods that you can use for your diaper pail- a dry pail and a wet pail. A dry pail is as it sounds. When you have finished a diaper change you put the soiled diaper into the diaper pail. You can use a liner if you wish; you can also cover your diaper pail if it helps keep little fingers and little critters from getting in. A wet pail is a diaper pail that has water in it to allow your diapers to soak before washing. The majority of cloth diapering parents use a dry pail and then do a quick rinse in the washing machine before they wash their diapers to remove and extra waste that didn't get washed into the toilet.

When washing your diapers you should only add about ¼ cup of detergent to the washing machine. This helps to reduce any sort of residue or build-up on your diapers that can cause them to leak or decrease in absorbency. You should never use bleach or fabric softener on your diapers as it can ruin them. If you find that you have stains on your diapers hanging them on the line will help to reduce the appearance of the stain. As an added bonus, your diapers smell fresher and you have used less energy.

Washing hemp and bamboo products is a bit different than washing microfleece or microterry products. Hemp and bamboo are natural products that have oils in them that can reduce absorbency. It's always a good idea to wash these items alone for the first few washes so that the oils don't get on your diapers and reduce their absorbency as well. Hemp products should be washed about 6-8 times before they will reach their full absorbency, however, you can use them before the suggested number of washings. Bamboo products need to be washed 8-10 times before reaching their full absorbency potential.

Every once in a while you will notice that your diapers aren't absorbing as well, or have a faint ammonia odour. When this happens your diapers need to be stripped. This can be done a number of ways. Some of the more popular ways are adding 9vinegar or Dawn dish soap to the wash. It should be kept in mind that some diaper makers recommend that vinegar should not be used as it can have an adverse reaction to the elastic in your diapers. Some will even void the warranty on diapers if vinegar is used. When using Dawn add a small amount to your wash and wash on the hottest setting. You will need to wash a few times and check that there are no suds left in the washing machine before you dry your diapers.