

the disposable dilemma

By Kate Meads*

Disposables or cloth nappies? With increasing awareness of the impact our everyday actions have on the environment, many parents are turning to modern and stylish cloth nappies. Kate Meads, aka The Nappy Lady, talks us through choosing a cloth nappy for your youngster.

As new parents or parents-to-be, many of us may consider using cloth nappies at some stage, but then generally tend to just go with the perceived convenience of disposables from day one.

Why this is? Most of us just follow everyone else's lead and think that cloth nappies will be too much like hard work. I believe this is because we still think of cloth nappies as big flat nappies floating in the wind with tonnes of folding required, buckets of dirty nappies soaking and nasty old pins.

As new parents, we brought some flat cloth nappies and gave up before we had even tried them. Little did we know that there were some more convenient cloth nappies out there called MCNs (modern cloth nappies). We had no idea that cloth nappies had evolved and become far more effective and hi-tech than the old flat ones. Today's cloth nappies no longer require soaking, folding or pins and we worked out very quickly that we could save money even if only using them part-time.

wow ... but how do you choose?

How could it be that there are so many brands available? It is like a whole world of fluffiness that you had no idea ever existed until you had a baby!

You start doing a bit of research and before you know it you are hooked on cloth nappies but generally quite confused about the best type to suit your baby and lifestyle. You are confronted with crazy new terms like: fitted nappies, pockets, AIOs, OSFA, pre-folds, all-in-twos, snap-in-ones, inserts, boosters, covers, wraps, liners and the list goes on, and that is without even choosing between the different brands.

let's make it simple

There are two main parts to every nappy system.

the nappy (the absorbent part): this is what absorbs any wetness and is made from a range of different fabrics; for example, bamboo, cotton, microfibre, hemp. The absorbent part may also be called an insert or a booster.

the wrap (the waterproof part): the wrap is the outermost part of the nappy. It keeps any wetness inside the nappy system.

Additionally, inside the nappy you may end up using:

a liner (this catches the solids): the liner sits against the baby's skin. A flushable liner is one you flush straight down the

toilet, or you can use reusable synthetic liners which keep baby's skin drier. In some nappy systems, the liner is already a part of the nappy.

a booster/doubler (boosts the absorbency of the nappy system): these are made from multiple layers of fabric and are great for heavy-wetters and night-time use. The booster would normally be inserted between the nappy and the liner.

styles:

There are four main styles of nappy available today and then there are styles within styles (which is when it can become a bit confusing).



1 pre-folds: the basic nappy

Pre-folds are like an upgraded flat nappy. They are a great money-saving option as they are quite a bit cheaper than some of the more hi-tech nappies available today and they make a great newborn nappy. I recommend that parents using pre-folds use the specific covers designed to go over pre-folds. The better covers will cost a bit more, but I found it well worth the extra expense.



2 fitted nappies: poonami proof

Fitted Nappies are where the nappy is fitted (elasticised around the legs and waist) and the wrap is separate, providing two leak guards giving excellent poop containment. They are a really absorbent nappy, so they also make a great night nappy option.



3 pocket nappies: fast drying

A pocket nappy is where the nappy has a pocket in the back or the front of the nappy where you add and remove the absorbency from inside the pocket. The pocket nappies are a great day nappy because once all the pieces are together, they are like a one piece to put on. The biggest benefit of the pocket nappy is its ability to dry super quickly because they are generally made from synthetic fabrics.



4 all-in-ones: convenience

An all-in-one nappy is the easiest nappy to use because all of the bits are sewn together. This style is most like using a disposable nappy. It is just one piece and it is put on just like a disposable nappy. The all-in-ones are great for putting on a moving child or for babysitters, daycares and grandparents to use.



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how many nappies do i need?

Newborns are normally changed around 8-10 times per day and infants are generally changed around 3-5 times per day, so it depends on the age of your child as to how many nappies you will need to get started.

If you are just wanting to have a go and see if you are going to like using cloth nappies, my suggestion is to get a couple of nappies or trial packs and just give it a go. I would like to see every baby using at least one cloth nappy per day. If we all had one cloth nappy change per day at home, this would prevent one million nappies per week from going to landfill. But we would still be able to use the disposables for extra convenience. If you are only intending to use cloth nappies on a home day, for example, then start with around 4-6 nappies and see how you go.

It is important to remember that all nappies, both cloth and disposable, should be changed regularly, regardless of how much moisture they can absorb. This will prevent a bacterial build-up in the nappy which can cause skin irritation (nappy rash).

Remember that not every nappy suits every

baby. Sometimes you may find that your baby leaks out of a particular nappy. There could be many reasons for this: it may be the wrong size; the style mightn't suit their body shape; the absorbency is not enough for the amount your baby drinks. (This can be the case with disposables as well.) If this is the case, you could swap them with a friend and try a different brand, or there is a good market for second-hand cloth nappies on Trade Me.

Using cloth nappies is not as hard as you may think, so be brave and have a go and you may be pleasantly surprised at just how easy and cute they are.

** Kate is mum to Daniel and is referred to as an environmental superhero with the work she is doing with councils around the country. Kate also runs regular workshops for parents where they can receive free cloth nappies from their local council or her sponsors. www.thenappylady.co.nz*