

THE GREAT DIAPER DEBATE

As if diapering weren't challenging enough, there's all the eco-guilt that comes with it. When you consider the life cycle of a diaper (whether cloth or plastic) and the number of them you'll use, it's hard not to feel as though you're messing with the planet. The best solution? Potty training! Until then, here's the straight poop. —MINDY PENNYBACKER

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No matter which type of diaper you use, flush feces instead of sending it to landfills, where it contributes to the production of methane.

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—ALAN HERSHKOWITZ, PH.D.,
NATURAL RESOURCES
DEFENSE COUNCIL

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO BREAK DOWN?

Time estimates are for ideal light and air conditions.

CLOTH
about 6 months

DISPOSABLE
at least 500 years

CLOTH VS. DISPOSABLE

MATERIALS

Generally made from cotton, and often paired with an absorbent cover.

Typically made with chlorine-bleached wood pulp and petroleum-based plastic.

DIRTY DETAILS

Cloth diapers can use up to 25 percent more energy and more than twice as much water to produce than plastic.

Your baby is probably going to go through around 8,000 diapers—all of which will end up in landfills.

HASSLE FACTOR

Get ready to live in your laundry room.

So long as you turn off your eco-conscience, disposal is quick and painless.

KEEP IN MIND

Commercial laundering creates about half the amount of emissions as home laundering but could add thousands to your overall cost.

The gels, perfumes, and chlorine that will likely leach from landfills have yet to be analyzed in terms of possible health effects.

COST PER YEAR

About **\$170** per child

About **\$725** per child

OUR PICK



Real Nappies cloth diapers are guaranteed to last through two children.

Essential Pack (Newborn), \$60, realnappiesusa.com



Seventh Generation's Free & Clear are free of bleach, latex, and fragrance. \$11 for 44, seventhgeneration.com

THE MIDDLE GROUND



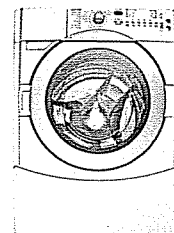
gDiapers feature waterproof cotton covers with flushable (or compostable) cotton-hemp inserts, earning them Cradle-to-Cradle certification for life-cycle eco-friendliness. gBaby bundle, \$150 for 80 biodegradable inserts, 12 newborn gPants, and 6 baby gPants, gdiapers.com

UP TO
95%

OF PARENTS
in the U.S. use
disposable diapers.

KNOW THE FLOW

With cloth diapers, water usage is, by far, the biggest drawback.



1 = 35
LOAD FLUSHES



18 BILLION
DISPOSABLE DIAPERS
are sent to American landfills
every year.