

The Canberra Environment & Sustainability Resource Centre wants every family to have the information they require to do their part for a sustainable Canberra. The Re-usable Nappy Library is a way for parents of new babies and parents-to-be to look at and try the range of modern cloth nappies available and decide which is the most suitable for their child.

Aren't cloth nappies more expensive than disposables?

While disposable nappies provide a convenient option, they really don't stack up well in the economy stakes:

Cost of disposable nappies for 2 years	\$2600-\$3000
Cost of reusable nappies for 2 years	\$200-\$1000

There is the added benefit that the reusable nappies can be used for second or subsequent babies or if no longer needed, can be sold secondhand.

Do nappies really have an impact on the environment?

In Australia alone 800,000 nappies are sent to landfill each year. This would fill the MCG three times over *every single year*. The nappies do not break down in landfill and their contents, which amounts to raw sewage, discharge into the water table via the soil. Disposable nappies are essentially toxic waste. The fact that they don't decompose also means that every disposable nappy that has ever been used is still in a landfill! Landfills are a major source of greenhouse emissions: less landfill = less emissions.

But doesn't it take more water to wash cloth nappies?

The days of soaking and hot-water washing are over. Modern cloth nappies do not need to be soaked and they can be machine washed in cold water. Obviously you will need to wash more often with a baby in

the family, but compared to the ecological problem of toxic landfill, the extra water is negligible. There is also the consideration that disposable nappies, while not needing to be washed, still contain a lot of embodied energy - this simply means that the disposable nappies you buy from the supermarket have already used a lot of water and energy in their manufacture and transportation.

How are cloth nappies more sustainable?

Modern cloth nappies come in a range of fabrics including hemp and bamboo, which are made from sustainably grown plantations and crops. They are manufactured in Australia, which reduces the amount of energy required for their transportation.

In most cases these products are designed and made by small local companies or cooperatives using products sourced locally, so supporting them is also a way of supporting a strong local economy.

Aren't disposables more hygienic?

Disposable nappies are designed to draw moisture away from your baby's skin. This doesn't mean they're more hygienic, just more comfortable *after* they have been wet or soiled. Essentially, your baby still has human waste next to their skin, even if they're more comfortable with it there. Some babies will develop skin allergies or reactions to the chemicals in disposable nappies. This is highly unlikely to happen with cloth nappies. They may develop a reaction to a certain detergent or soap, but the cloth itself is a natural product and largely chemical-free.



It's a matter of finding the right balance - the right choice for your baby and the right choice for the environment that your child will inherit.