

Idaho Falls Pediatrics

Diapers: Reusable vs. Disposable

Whether to use disposable or cloth diapers is a controversial issue. Disposable diapers have become extremely popular in our country. However, disposable diapers are thrown away after just one use into already overflowing landfills. Let's compare disposable diapers with cloth diapers.

- **Rashes.** One type of diaper is not better than the other for preventing diaper rash. Diaper rash happens about the same amount with both types of diapers.
- **Pins.** Disposable diapers don't require diaper pins. But you don't need diaper pins for cloth diapers either if you buy diaper covers with Velcro straps.
- **Convenience.** Disposable diapers are very convenient. They make it easier to travel. They are also useful at child care centers. Also, super absorbent disposable diapers do not leak.
- **Cost.** The average cost of disposable diapers is about 20 cents a diaper. Cloth diapers from a diaper service cost about 12 cents a diaper. If you wash your own diapers the cost is about 3 cents a diaper after the initial purchase. A diaper service will save you over \$500 per child. Washing your own diapers will save you over \$1200 per child.
- **Wetness.** If you are breast-feeding you may want to know how often your baby wets so you can check if your baby is getting enough breast milk. It is easy to know when a cloth diaper is wet. It is more difficult to know when a disposable diaper is wet.

Which kind of diaper should you use?

You may want to take advantage of both options. You can use cloth diapers when you are home. Use disposable diapers when you are traveling or as a backup if you run out of clean cloth diapers.

Use disposable diapers when your child has diarrhea because they prevent leakage of watery stools. Some parents prefer disposable diapers at night because they are leak-proof.

If you decide to use cloth diapers, you may consider using a diaper service. This is especially useful during the first 2 or 3 months, when you are exhausted by new baby care. Diaper services are efficient, provide clean diapers, and pick up dirty diapers once a week.

If you are planning to wash your own diapers, you will need to buy 3 to 6 dozen cloth diapers. You will also need to buy several diaper covers or plastic pants. You will also need a diaper pail for storing dirty diapers until wash time. (No matter which type of diaper you use, you should scrape bowel movements into the toilet.)

*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.