

Contents

- 1 Introducing Real Nappies
- 2-3 Protecting our Environment... for the children of tomorrow
- 4-5 Advantages of Cloth Nappies
- 6-7 How to Choose a Cloth Nappy
- 8-9 Home Washing or Laundry Service
- 10-11 Nappy Change Tips... whether you use Cloth or disposable nappies
- 12-13 For those who prefer the traditional Terry square

Introducing real nappies.

A modern cloth nappy system consists of a liner, a nappy and a waterproof outer cover, which work together to provide maximum comfort, reliability and efficiency.

The liner allows wetness to pass into the nappy, while retaining solids for easy disposal. You can choose between liners that flush away or washable liners, which offer an effective stay dry layer.

New style cloth nappies are shaped to fit, with integral fastenings for quick, easy changes. They are designed to provide greatest absorbency where it is needed. Capillary action channels liquids away from the centre, allowing these nappies to absorb several times their own weight in liquid with the minimum of bulk, and being fabric, they are soft against your baby's skin.

Hi-tech covers are well designed and manufactured from the latest high performance, breathable materials. Soft, durable and leak proof, they may last for several children, and they look good too! White or fun prints – the choice is yours.

A wide variety of cloth nappy systems are now available, from simple Terry cotton squares to shaped all-in-ones that just Velcro® or popper on.

The three basic types are:

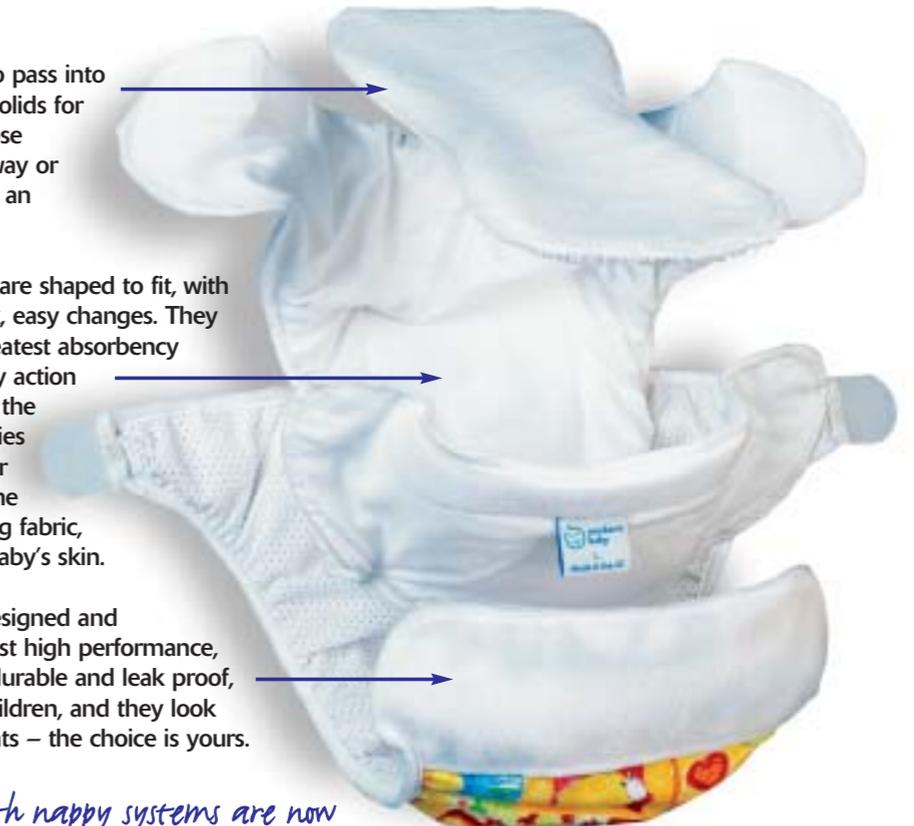
Flat nappies with separate waterproof covers ("flat 2 piece systems") are cheap and versatile. Apart from traditional terry squares, muslins, prefolds and continental tie-ons also fall into this group. They need some folding to fit the baby, and may need to be fastened. Modern Nappi Nippas or special wraps have taken the place of pins though, so even Terry squares have changed!



Shaped nappies with separate waterproof covers ("shaped 2 piece systems") are fitted, with elasticated waist and legs and generally have a neater fit than flat nappies. With Velcro or popper fastenings, they are very easy to put on, and because they come in two parts, they wash and dry easily.



All-in-one nappies, with a built-in waterproof outer are especially easy to use. They are the nearest thing to a disposable, except you don't throw them away! Generally taking longer to dry than other nappy types, they are particularly good for occasional carers or when out and about.



Protecting our environment... ...for the children of tomorrow.

By using real nappies, you really are helping the environment. Disposable nappies are a one-use item for which no recycling facility currently exists in the UK. Putting them into your bin is not the solution. Once your rubbish has been collected, it is taken to a landfill site, and in Cheshire approximately 3% of household waste is disposable nappies. Around 16,000 children are in nappies in Cheshire at any one time, producing in a year up to 36 million nappies to be disposed of.

- **One baby's disposable nappy waste in one year will fill 40 black plastic sacks, or a little over 12 wheelie bins.**
- **Approximately 8 million disposables are used in Britain every day, of which around 7.5 million end up in landfill sites.** (Source: AHPMA)
- **No-one knows how long the plastic part of a disposable nappy takes to break down, but it is not biodegradable. This is estimated to be 10% of the used disposable.** (Source: AHPMA) **As they have only been around for 30 years, this means that part of every disposable ever put into a landfill site is presumably still there. Quite apart from all the plastic bags in which they are contained, to mask the smell while still in your wheelie bin.**
- **Bulk nappy waste from hospitals and nurseries should be disposed of as clinical waste by incineration, which accounts for nearly 500,000 nappies a day. Clinical waste management costs the NHS between £250-£350 per tonne.** (Source: Environment Agency) **Disposable nappies are prominent among the list of objects that cause blockages in sewage pipes.**
- **Approximately 94% of disposables end up in landfill sites. The remaining 6% are predominantly incinerated as clinical waste but many also end up as litter, at roadsides, in car parks, public toilets, residential areas, beaches and beauty spots.**
- **Dealing with disposable nappies now costs Cheshire Councils over £300,000 in disposal costs every year**



Using cloth nappies will mean no nappy waste sent to landfill

Cheshire County and District Councils are committed to waste reduction and launched the Cheshire Real Nappy Network in February 2003. The aim is to provide information to parents, health professionals and carers about reusable nappies, and encourage parents to consider the reusable option when deciding on nappies for their children.

With increased awareness of the environmental and financial issues many parents in Cheshire are now choosing to try reusable nappies. The Network provides them with assistance and support. During the first 8 months the Network helped 130 families preventing over 50,000 nappies from going to landfill.

(Source: Best Foot Forward).



Through ongoing awareness initiatives and assistance Cheshire Real Nappy Network will continue to promote the use of reusable nappies over disposables.

Janet Sampson – Waste Education and Promotions Officer.

Advantages of real nappies.

Many people don't appreciate the many positive benefits of modern cloth nappies.

Environmental

Real nappies send no waste at all to landfill. Whilst both cloth and disposable nappies have an environmental impact, the consumer has more flexibility to minimise this when using real nappies.

Financial

Even taking into account washing costs and washing machine depreciation, parents could save hundreds of pounds by using cotton nappies rather than disposables, for a first child alone. The more children you have, the more you save, as the nappies can largely be reused. This saving will vary depending on what type of disposable and cloth nappy products are being compared.

Chemical

Modern disposables are so small when unused, because they operate by containing super absorber granules. Once used, the nappies puff up to many times their original size and weight, as the granules turn into a gel by the interaction of the child's urine. Cloth nappies are comparatively bulky when dry, but become no larger when wet, only a little heavier, because they work by absorbing the urine into the fabric. Cloth nappies are a more natural product against the skin and therefore, parents have more direct control over their child's chemical environment.

Hygienic

Real cloth nappies are used with a liner to catch the faeces, so that it can be flushed into the toilet, the only system specifically designed to deal with human waste. On the other hand, it is often not easy to remove faeces from a disposable, and so it tends to be wrapped up with the nappy and sent to landfill. Hence the sales of all those scented nappy sacks. The image of the smelly nappy bin is, quite simply, a myth!

Reliability

Because cloth nappies tend to have a snug fit around waist and legs, they are generally very reliable, especially those with a separate cover. Never underestimate how explosive a child's output can be, especially in the pre-weaning weeks if they are breast-fed! Do not accept leaks as the norm – with a good nappy, they should rarely, if ever, happen.

Padding

When your child learns to walk, the chances are, he or she will fall over a lot at first. Because cloth nappies are more bulky than disposables, they provide good padding for the base of the spine.

Toilet Training

It is by no means proven or guaranteed, but children in cloth nappies do tend to toilet train around 6 months earlier than those in disposables. It may be the case that they learn the connection between bladder release and a wet nappy rather earlier because there is no stay dry layer to create an artificially dry environment.

Real nappies have a certain something!

Until you use real nappies for your own child, you won't really appreciate this last advantage. Maybe they appeal to some kind of deep parenting instinct, but parents often love cloth nappies, in a way that they never feel about disposables.

"...Cloth nappies have bettered my children's eczema for their breatheability and natural fibres and even with washing my own, we discovered we have saved over £500 this year with two in nappies..." Kimberly S

"...Impressed does not even come close to telling you what I think..." Elaine W

"...We have a duty to our children, by not buying into the disposable culture, we are preserving valuable resources for our children's future..." Kate S

"... Cloth nappies are fantastic, environmentally, and great against babies' skin. I would never use a disposable on my daughter..." Amanda L

(All of the above are quotes from genuine, unsolicited letters from cloth nappy users, and the originals of these and many more like them can be inspected on request).

The Cheshire Real Nappy Network

"We are currently able to give Cheshire parents the opportunity to try reusable nappies, by offering either: 1 month **FREE** nappy laundering service or up to £25.00 cash back on reusable nappy purchases (half of the amount spent up to a maximum of £25)". (Subject to availability)

Contact: **01244 603574**, Waste Management Service, Backford Hall, Chester CH2 3PW.

Will my baby be more prone to nappy rash?



You should bear in mind the fact that cloth nappies are often enthusiastically promoted by the parents who use them for their children. They would hardly do so if these nappies gave rise to more nappy rash than the alternative. The most important factor in avoiding nappy rash is proper cleaning of your baby's bottom at every nappy change, whether or not the nappy has been soiled.

In an Independent study on infants with "very bad" and "quite bad" nappy rash, "the type of nappy worn did not emerge as a significant factor. Therefore, and contrary to widespread belief, disposable nappies seem to have little protective effect".*

* Research conducted by Professor Jean Golding of Bristol University

How to choose a cloth nappy.

A good nappy seller will ask you some key questions before advising you on the right type of nappy for your circumstances. There are pros and cons to each choice, and you may need to compromise on some of your priorities. Alternatively, you might want to get a mix of different systems, to cater for different circumstances (eg at home and at childcare).

If you are using a nappy laundry service, you are generally limited to prefolds, although you can choose whether to pad fold or pin these for better containment. The following questions are therefore irrelevant in this case.

Key issues to consider.

Age of child.

- A newborn baby goes through many more nappies per 24 hours than an older child, so you will need either to do a daily nappy wash in the early days or to buy more nappies.
- In the pre-weaning weeks, a breastfed child is normally more prone to explosive motions than either a bottle-fed child or an older child. If the cheapness of pad folded prefolds appeals, you may need to compromise for a few weeks on containment.
- The older the child, the fewer the nappies you will need to buy. Equally, a child over approximately 20lbs (8 months or so) will go straight into the largest size of shaped nappies and wraps, saving further on cost.

Drying facilities.

- In this country, a tumble drier may not be essential, but it is a serious advantage. As long as you have either an outside line, radiators, an airing cupboard or a clotheshorse, you can use cotton nappies. However, the fewer drying options you have, the more nappies you need, or the shorter a wash cycle you should have.
- The more limited your drying options, the more you should consider using either flat nappies or nappies which open out for faster drying. All in ones are generally not very practical without the backup of a tumble drier, unless they form only a small part of your overall nappy system.

Childcare.

- The more people who are likely to change your child's nappies, the more important it is to have an easy-to-use reliable nappy. Most nappies are reliable if put on carefully and properly checked for fit - however, in a nursery setting, for instance, that level of care is unlikely to be taken. An all-in-one Velcro® fastening nappy may well be the most suitable option for a nursery or childminder, whatever you use at home.
- Whatever nappy system you use for childcare, it is important to have enough of that type so that you can always provide the same ones for your carer.

Budget vs reliability.

- It can be a mistake to focus too much on cost if this means that the nappies you get do not meet your other criteria, such as ease of use or reliability. It would be better to get fewer nappies of a type more suitable to your requirements, maybe topping up later as budget allows. Cheap nappies not used are still expensive!
- On the other hand, people who make a positive choice for terry squares normally get on with them very well. Folded and fastened with Nappi Nippas, they provide just as good containment as shaped nappies. Like everything else, it is just a skill to learn.

Even if you decide to economise with your nappies, it is well worth investing in a good brand of breathable wrap. Once you have finished with them, you can even sell them and recoup a large part of the original cost.
- The better quality nappies may well be more expensive to buy initially. On the other hand, there is a good second-hand market for them on the internet, so their overall cost compares well with cheaper brands. Some high street brands are notoriously difficult to sell second-hand, which gives you a good indication about their performance. Have a look at www.ukparents.co.uk in the parenting forum or www.thenappylady.co.uk sellers' corner, to see the types and prices of second-hand cloth nappies for sale.

Two in nappies?

- If you are likely to have two children of different ages in nappies at the same time, a "one size fits all" option is attractive. This may mean a flat nappy or a birth to toddler shaped nappy.
- Alternatively, it may be that you expect to have more than one child, but not both in nappies at the same time, in which case it is less important to have a one size option, but should look for the more durable nappy brands. Your nappy seller should be able to advise on the expected lifespan of a particular nappy or wrap.

How many nappies should I buy?

How long is a piece of string?! All of the above factors need to be taken into account, including how frequent a wash cycle you plan to have. The ideal is to have some fresh nappies ready for use, some nappies in the bucket and some nappies currently drying, and to keep this laundry cycle moving. If you have a tumble drier, this is less critical.

As a general rule, you need around 20 nappies for a newborn, or 14-15 for a child on solids, plus around 4 wraps at each stage. Wraps come in a number of different sizes, but the most common sizes are 6-12lbs, 10-20lbs and 20lbs+. Many people choose not to use cotton nappies until their child is around 10lbs anyway, thus immediately cutting out the cost of the first size wraps.

If you are going for a flat nappy or birth to toddler shaped nappy, this may mean you need only 20 nappies from birth. If you opt for a sized nappy from birth, you will need around 20 of the first size and 14-15 of the second size nappy. Many people mix and match, for instance buying 14 birth to toddler nappies plus an additional 6 x size 1 nappies for the early days.

Home washing or laundry service?

There are two ways to use real nappies: either your machine washes them, or someone else's does, as part of a laundry service.

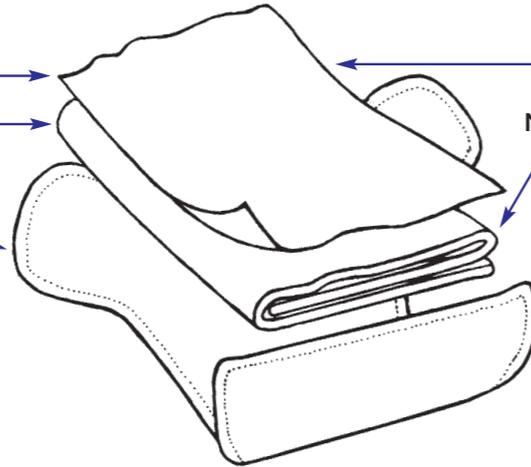
Either way, it is really easy...

Home washing.

Liner is flushed away

Nappy is machine-washed

Wrap is machine or hand-washed



Laundry Service.

Liner is flushed away

Nappy is placed in bin provided

Wrap is machine or hand-washed

You choose.

Home washing.

- The cheapest nappy option, even taking into account the cost of washing powder, energy and depreciation of the washing machine.
- You have a wide range of nappy types to choose from, so can select the best style for your individual circumstances.
- Let your machine do the work – a simple wash at 60°C will sterilise the nappies.
- Select a routine which suits you, maybe washing every 2-3 days.
- Air drying is cheaper, but tumble drying is faster. Many parents use a mixture of both.

Laundry service.

- Uses prefold nappies in a wrap, both of which you hire from the laundry service.
- Your used nappies are collected every week and clean nappies are returned to your door in their place.
- Especially convenient for working parents.
- Overall, may be the most environmentally friendly nappy method available, according to ecological footprinting calculations.
- Simple and sanitary – nappies sterilised to hospital standards.
- Cost is roughly equivalent to the cost of disposables overall.

There are many tips and tricks to help you get the best out of your new nappies - see page 10 in this booklet.

Getting back to work

There is no reason at all why your childcare provider should not use cloth nappies for your child, when you go back to work. Most care providers will be happy to follow reasonable requests, and it will save them having to dispose of what is, technically, clinical waste. Carers do not need to use anything other than a proper storage bag and the nappies.

However, as real nappies are still very much a minority choice at the moment, you might need to give your childcare provider confidence that you are not going to make their life any harder! Follow these simple tips:

- Give them a familiarisation run-through of the different parts of a real nappy, and how they work together. Go through a nappy change with them on your child, showing how you check that the nappy is properly waterproof etc.
- Choose a nice, easy and reliable nappy for your carer to use, and be consistent about it, even if you use other types of nappy at home.
- Encourage them to talk to you if they have any problems settling in with the nappies - better to find out about it in the early days, when it can be easily sorted out, as it is usually something very simple.



Nappy change tips...

Whatever kind of nappies you use...

- Change nappies more frequently in the early days, while your baby's skin is still very vulnerable and they may be having lots of little motions. For a newborn, you should be changing at least every 2½ hours, less frequently as they go onto solids and bowel habits settle down. By the time a child is 18 months old, they will probably be changed around 4 times in a 24 hour period, again depending on bowel frequency and general sensitivity.
- When you change a soiled nappy, if you carry tissues or toilet paper with you, you can wipe faeces off both the baby's bottom and the nappy easily, for flushing straight into the toilet. With older children, it is often easy just to tip the nappy contents straight into the toilet. This is far more hygienic than wrapping it up and sending it to landfill, a process not specifically designed to cater for human waste. If using cloth nappies, you will have a detachable liner that serves this purpose more easily!
- Whether baby has had a motion or not, wipe the whole nappy area thoroughly at each nappy change. Just because a baby's bottom is dry does not mean it is clean if they have past urine.
This is the single most effective way of preventing your child from suffering nappy rash.
- When you wipe your baby, clean between the folds of skin, especially at the top of the legs and underneath genitals. However, don't go poking around inside any parts – nature has its own self-cleaning mechanism, which you should not interfere with.
- If you clean your baby's bottom properly at each nappy change, you should not normally need to use "lotions and potions" as standard, as this provides adequate protection for them. Creams etc are best kept for vulnerable periods such as during teething episodes.
- If you find yourself using lots of creams to keep rashing at bay, even if you clean thoroughly, you may find your child is sensitive to the wipes or the disposable nappies you are using or to the detergent used for washing cloth nappies. A switch to washable wipes and/or cloth nappies, or to non-biological powder will usually solve this problem. Cutting out commercial wipes as a first step is standard advice from most midwives and health visitors, when soreness is a problem.
- Commercial wipes are convenient when out, but can double your overall nappy cost if you use them full time. There's nothing wrong with fabric squares or cotton wool – they clean your baby's bottom just as well, at a fraction of the cost!
- Rather than spending money on disposable change mats which just add to the landfill problem, use washable or wipeable change mats.

Cloth nappy change and care tips...

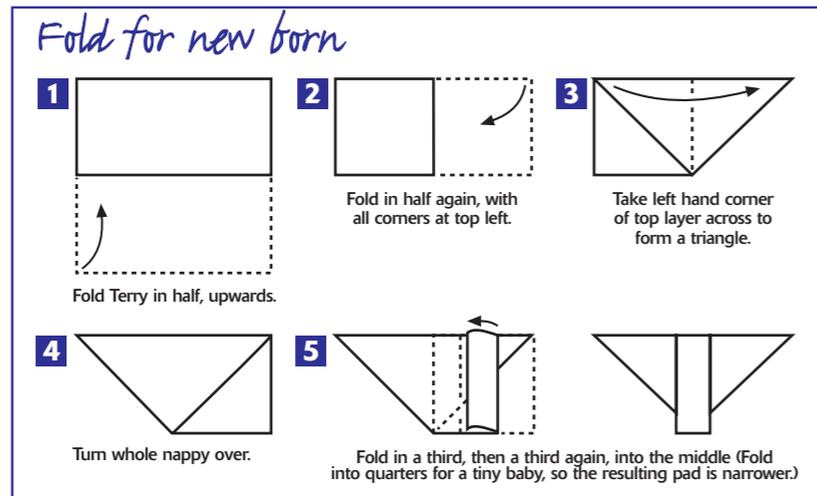
- When you put the wrap on, a quick check around the legs and waist will ensure that no fabric is sticking out. If you get leaks, this is very often the cause.
- Boosting the nappy is normally needed for night use, and may be necessary for heavy wetters during the day. Provide padding where it is most needed, normally at the front for boys and between the legs for girls.
- Washing at 60°C is perfectly adequate to sterilise nappies. Some wraps can also be washed in with the nappy wash, while others may need to be washed at a lower temperature or handwashed.
- Store nappies prior to washing either in a lidded nappy bucket or in a waterproof bag. It is up to you whether to soak or "dry pail" your nappies. Try both to see which suits you best. You will find that soaking effectively pre-cleans the nappies somewhat, reducing the likelihood of staining. On the other hand, this means the bucket will smell when the lid is raised, more than if you dry pail. With a lidded bucket, however, the smell should not generally escape, whatever method you use.
- If you soak, half fill the bucket with water and add a tablespoon of vinegar, bicarbonate of soda OR Nappy Fresh powder as a sanitising agent. Bleach (Nappisan) is not recommended for wraps or for modern cloth nappies with Velcro® or elastication.
- If you dry pail, simply rinse through soiled nappies before adding them to the bucket, to prevent stains from setting. All you have in the bucket are the soiled nappies, and no liquid is needed. If dry pailing, you may wish to do the occasional prewash to give your nappies a whiteness boost.
- Fold down any Velcro® fastenings before washing, to stop nappies "balling up" in the wash.
- It is best to avoid tumble drying wraps, as this may affect the waterproofing on them. Most synthetic wraps air dry very quickly, in any event.
- Tumble drying nappies will keep them softer, but will increase the laundering cost somewhat. A good compromise is to tumble dry nappies for 10 minutes and then air dry.
- Your nappy seller will be able to advise you on any specific problems you encounter – cloth nappies are normally at least as reliable as disposables, if not more so, so it is important to nip any problems in the bud. Do not assume that any problems you encounter are to do with the nappies – there is probably something you are not doing quite right, which can be easily sorted out. If you are online, www.thenappylady.co.uk is the UK's most comprehensive information resource for real nappies, and advice on almost every related topic is available.

For those who prefer the traditional Terry square.

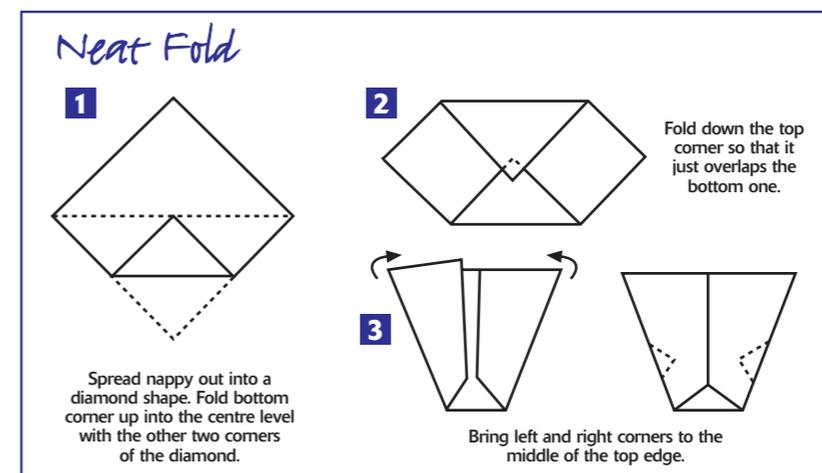
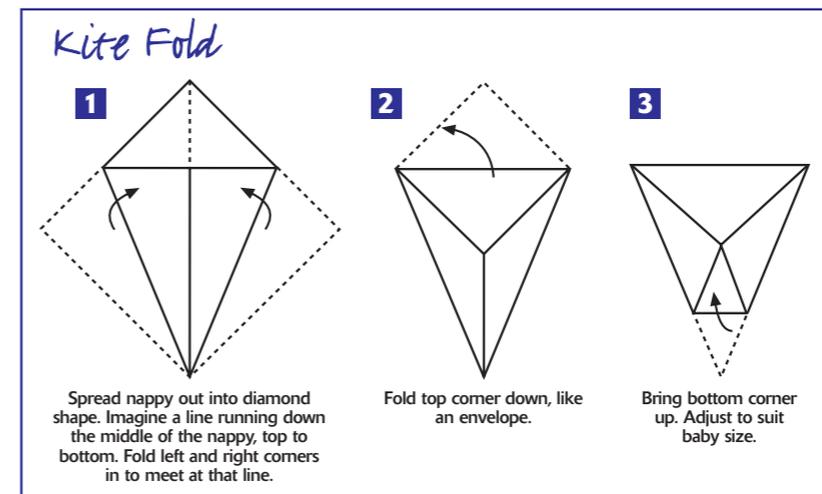
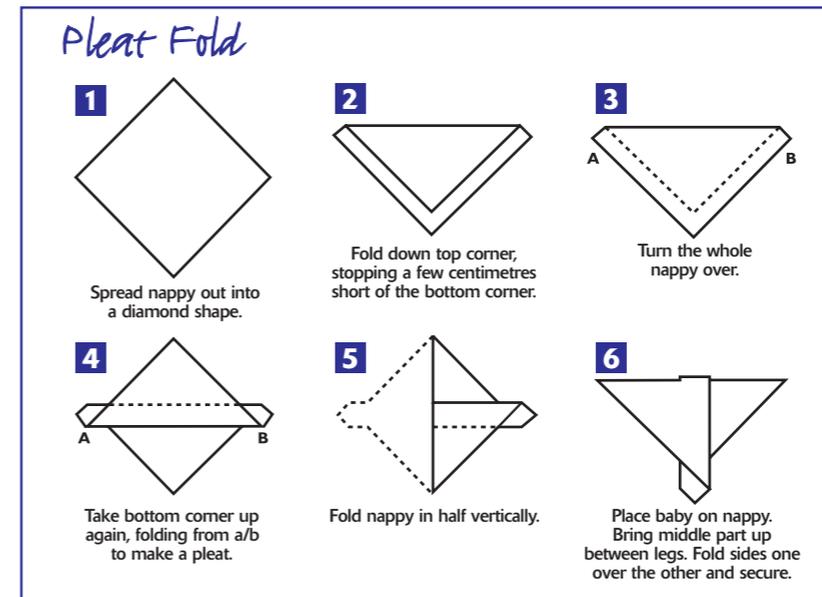
Despite the choice of modern cloth nappies available, many people still opt for the traditional Terry square, maybe because of budget, availability or aesthetic appeal. Like any skill you learn, it may take a few goes before you get the knack, but it's easy once you know how.

Some useful tips:

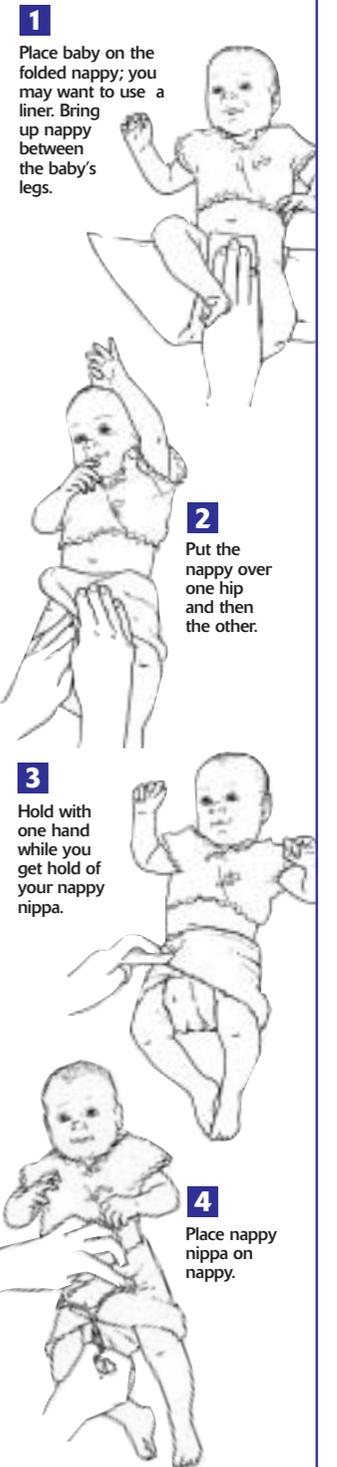
- There are many ways to fold a terry, some far more reliable than the normal kite fold. Try some of the ideas on these two pages, to see which way suits you best.
- Your local nappy agent probably stocks far better quality terry squares than you can buy on the high street, so make sure you compare the quality and cost.
- If using pins, you need good sharp ones, to go through the fabric easily. Again, these are best bought from a nappy agent or retailer, rather than on the high street.
- Modern Nappi Nippas are a far quicker, easier and safer alternative to pins. They give a much better fit to pinned terries, which further improves reliability.
- Plastic pants may look cheap, but they are also not very durable – if you have to keep replacing them, they are not cheap overall, as well as not being breathable. A good breathable cover, suitable for pinned terries, will be very economical in the long run, and you could even sell it on afterwards!
- When you go out, take your terries ready folded and with liners in, as baby changing areas rarely have the space to do this.



How to....



When using a Nappi Nippa





Partnership Members

Cheshire County Council

Chester City Council

Congleton Borough Council

Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council

Macclesfield Borough Council

Vale Royal Borough Council

Your Guide to Real Nappies

The **Changing Nappies Scheme** offers financial rewards to parents choosing to use real cotton nappies.

For further information please contact the **Waste Management Service**:

Telephone: 01244 603574 email: sampsonjb@cheshire.gov.uk



Changing Nappies is a Kent War on Waste publication.
With many thanks to AHPMA, CNIA and RNA for their support and guidance in the production of this guide.

Designed by Paul Kearry Design

Thanks to Jade and Gemma for being such lovely happy models.

Copyright© Kent County Council May 2002.

