

NAPPIES

According to the EPA, babies go through approximately 6,000 nappies before being toilet trained. On average, if they are disposable nappies, this equates to around 1500 kilograms of waste, taking over 500 years to break down. 3.75 Million disposable nappies are dumped every single day in Australia and New Zealand. This equates to 3 million trees being felled every year in the two countries. A baby in full time disposable nappies will create 2 tonnes of landfill, with each disposable nappy requiring 3.5 litres of water to produce. This is in addition to the amount of non-renewable natural gas used, the plastic and packaging material, and the greenhouse gas emissions created in the bleaching and manufacturing process.

It is estimated that disposable nappies make up 3.5% of our waste stream volume - frightening when you consider that nappies are a single product and are used by such a

narrow age group (EPA). For example, other materials in the waste stream are used by a greater section of the population such as plastic bags or glass bottles.

Approximately 25% of nappy waste is plastic and paper, with the rest being faeces and urine. While in landfill the nappies rot and produce gases including methane, adding to global warming. The rotting process also releases acids, mobilising metals and potentially seeping into groundwater.

Reference:

Environmental Protection Authority. Available at

<http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/publications/html/downtoearth/casestudies.htm>

www.modernclothnappies.org/facts.htm

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Do your research! Ensure you are aware of the many issues and alternatives relating to nappy use.
- Find out if there is a nappy laundering service in your area.
- The discussion between disposable nappy manufacturers and environmentalists continues. The links below are provided so you can make up your own mind.

MORE INFORMATION

- www.ozclothnappies.org - All you need to know about using Modern Cloth Nappies in Australia, including environmental issues.
- www.modernclothnappies.org/facts.htm - Facts and figures on cloth versus disposable nappies.
- <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/publications/html/downtoearth/casestudies.htm> - EPA case study on nappies and waste
- www.wen.org.uk/nappies/reports/Whyparents.pdf - A UK real nappy campaign website.
- www.huggies.com.au - a disposable nappy manufacturer's take on the nappy debate