

Hackney Real Nappy Network's -

Rough Guide to Using Real Nappies

The Hackney Real Nappy Network (HRNN) is a group of mums who use cotton nappies. We believe that cotton nappies are best for our babies and best for the environment.

We get together socially as well attending events to promote cotton nappies. Through attending these events and talking to other users we have put together this Guide. It includes a list of the kind of questions we get asked, and the answers we give, based on our own experiences. There is also a list of handy contacts at the end if you would like further information, or to join HRNN.

We hope you find the Guide useful.

The Basics

Things you will need to get started...

✓ Cotton nappies

These come in different shapes and sizes. You will be given the nappies as part of your weekly fee if you use a laundry service. The service's representative will help you with sizing for your baby. If you home wash you can use websites such as the Nappy Lady which will get you to fill in a questionnaire to help you determine what size and kind you will need for your baby.

✓ Liners

These fit inside the nappy and catch the poo. You can get biodegradable ones, and also cotton liners that can be washed.

✓ Wraps

These are the pants which fit around the nappies to keep them in place. They also provide a waterproof layer and stop leakages. Again they come in different shapes and sizes. If you use a laundry service, then the service's representative will probably help you with sizing for your baby and recommend a wrap to suit. Otherwise you can use websites like the Nappy Lady which will get you to fill in a questionnaire to help you determine which wrap will be best for your baby.

✓ Booster pads

This is an extra thick cotton pad that fits inside the main nappy. You won't necessarily need these, unless you baby pees a lot, especially at night.

✓ Nappy bin

A bin with a lid to store used nappies. If you use a nappy service you will be given one usually, on loan. Any bin with a good lid will do!

✓ Wet wipes

You can get biodegradable ones like the Nature brand from supermarkets. Cotton wipes are also available, which can be washed and re-used.

Frequently asked questions and answers (FAQs)

We have arranged the FAQs in alphabetical subject areas, so it is easier for you to get the information you need. Please remember that the answers we have given are based on our own experiences only!

Benefits to your baby

Is it true that cotton nappies lead to earlier potty training?

- In most cases. The carer can look at the nappy and see if the urine is being held and can thus easily spot that the baby is ready for potty training

What other benefits are there?

- It is so much nicer putting soft cotton against your baby's lovely bum than paper disposables!
- Babies seem to smell less in cotton nappies.

Benefits to the environment

Are they really better for the environment?

- Lots of people think so – like us!
- Only about 20 cotton nappies per baby need to be produced as opposed to about 4000 disposable ones. These also need to be transported to retailers and then to people's homes. The cotton nappies can also be recycled.

Costs

Are cotton nappies affordable?

- Yes! If you use a laundry service you get the nappies as part of your weekly fee. Everything else you will need to buy, for example wraps. If you home wash, you will need to buy everything, including about 20 or so cotton nappies. But ultimately home washing is probably the cheapest way of using cotton nappies, once you have bought the stuff you need
- Some boroughs offer cash incentives to get mums using cotton nappies. For example, in Hackney, Haringey and Camden you get £51, in Westminster £35, which you can put towards laundry service or home washing costs. In Islington you get £35 off for each baby under 1 and a further £15 when they are 1.

Hygiene/safety

How do I store dirty nappies?

- Bins are provided if you use a nappy service or just buy a bin with a lid if you home wash
- Bins don't smell (smell is subjective – it is only really bad when you open the bin!), but do take up some space

- You could always try using a drop of essential oil (perhaps tea tree) to wipe round the bin if you find it really difficult to bear
- Also don't rinse out the nappies before you put them in the bin – this adds water that activates bacteria and can make them really smelly
- Try and ensure good airflow through your house/flat.

Are they hygienic/safe?

- We think so. Laundry services generally launder in accordance with NHS standards. If you are home washing, 60 degrees will give them a good clean.

But don't I have to take the dirty nappies home with me?

- You might have to anyway if you couldn't find a suitable bin to put your used disposables in
- Taking your cotton nappies home means you don't have to open the smelly nappy bins in shops etc
- There are plastic-lined drawstring bags available from the Nappy Lady, to make storage when you are out easier.

Do you need to use pins?

- No. If you decide you need to put the cotton nappy on tighter to prevent leakage then you can buy plastic "nappy nippers" which are great and safe.

Leakage etc

Do they leak?

- No more than disposable nappies.

Can I use them at night?

- Yes. Although some people also use a booster, an extra large nappy and an extra waterproof wrap, just to make sure baby stays dry.

Can I use them on newborn babies?

- Yes
- Some people have concerns about rubbing on the navel – but disposables have the same problem. The solution if you face this problem is to get wraps which are "lower cut".

How do I stop the liners leaking?

- You can't really stop this for newborns or breastfed babies, but you'll get the same problem with disposables
- There are different kinds of liners available, so it is worth experimenting to see which work best for your baby
- The nappies can be folded in different ways to help keep the poo in place!

Do you need to change more often?

- No.

Mum concerns

Do they cause nappy rash?

- We have found that nappy rash is usually caused by not changing frequently enough, teething, weaning or the baby being sick
- The contact with urine the babies get from cotton nappies strengthens the skin –even some health visitors say this
- Disposables tend to be left on for longer because they are so successful at keeping the skin dry, which can lead to nappy rash.

Does my bum look big in this?

- Yes! But there are more trousers available now to fit around cotton nappies. It just means finding a brand which fits your baby's shape with a cotton nappy on. We have found Next, Ladybird, Mothercare are all pretty good. You may need to buy up a size.

Nurseries and childminders

Do/can nurseries and childminders use them?

- Yes they can. Some nurseries are now converting, but most still don't. However it is always worth asking and there are definitely some nurseries in Hackney now using them for example Mini Home and The Bath House.

Time

Do they take longer to change?

- They can initially if you have been used to disposables. But once you get used to them it can be a nice extra bit of contact with your baby, taking time to change their nappy unhurriedly!

My partner/husband worries that I will be taking on too much using cotton nappies, when I will already have a newborn to cope with!

- If you are worried about having too much to do then consider a laundry service, at least to start you off. They are very time efficient and using one will even mean you don't have to lug bulky disposables home from the supermarket.

Using a laundry service

Is a service cheap?

- Using a laundry service is more expensive than using disposable brands such as Pampers and Huggies, but earlier potty training means savings in the longer run
- A laundry service might cost £8.50 per week, so on average it is about £2.50 per week dearer than disposables, depending on how many changes. Although, over the longer term when pull-up disposables start to be used the costs become about equal. Plus these nappies are delivered to your door – no more lugging around big packs of nappies or worrying about running out.

I don't want to use someone else's nappies!

- The nappies are very clean when laundered.
- They are generally laundered to the same standard as hospital/hotel towels and sheets.

Washing your own nappies

How much does home washing cost?

- Home washing is cheaper than anything...just ask your mum! Once you have bought the basics it only means one more load of washing every few days.

How should I wash the nappies?

- Usually 60° is okay, using ordinary washing liquid such as Ecover.
- Some people soak the nappies first just before washing – with a couple of drops of tea tree or lavender oil, or quite a lot of bicarbonate of soda.

What do I do with my wraps and cotton nappies when I have finished with them?

- They can be sold or donated through a number of places, including e-Bay, the Nappy Lady website, Caroline Holding's exchange/pass on service, Women's Environmental Network. See Handy Contacts' section for more details.

Handy contacts

Hackney Real Nappy Network

The Hackney Real Nappy Network (HRNN) is a group of mums in the Hackney area who use cotton nappies. Members get together socially as well attending events to promote cotton nappies.

Contact: Ali Johnson: zbjsilver@yahoo.co.uk

Nappy Exchange/Pass on Service

Making sure re-usable nappies are being used

Contact: exchange@nappyeverafter.co.uk

Women's Environmental Network

Contact: www.wen.org.uk

The Nappy Lady

Offers sales, advice and support on cotton nappies

Contact: www.thenappylady.co.uk

Laundry services

- **Nappy Ever After**

Very popular with mums in Hackney and North London generally. Friendly service, lots of free advice. Use pushbikes and electrically powered vehicles to deliver/collect nappies each week.

Contact: www.nappyeverafter.co.uk

- **Number One for Nappies**

Based in Waltham Cross.

Contact: www.numberonefornappies.co.uk

- Details of other services in London can be found at: www.realnappycampaign.com