



Diapers

Diapers are a daily part of life with baby. The average baby goes through a whopping 8,000 diapers before they are potty trained and their diaper is the one thing that is always in contact with their skin. A number of companies now provide diapers made from more natural ingredients that are gentler on baby's bottom and the planet.

Why consider natural diapers?

The EPA says diapers account for 3.4 Million tons of waste dumped in to landfills each year. In addition, the average baby goes through 8,000 diapers before they are potty trained and their diaper is the one thing in constant contact with their skin. Many traditional diapers are made with ingredients such as chlorine and phthalates, which you may not want to put in contact with your baby's skin. In the last 50 years diaper rash has gone up 8x, from affecting less than 10% of babies in 1950 to nearly 80% by the 1990's.¹ It is reasonable to assume this increase was as a result of the introduction of disposable diapers in 1961.

A number of companies are now providing better choices and have diapers made from more natural ingredients that provide the convenience of disposables. These more natural ingredients provide a gentler, more breathable diaper, which should help to prevent diaper rash and allergic reactions.

Ingredients

A typical disposable diaper contains most/all of these materials:

1. **Chlorine** - treated wood pulp fluff/bleached paper fibers
2. **Sodium Polyacrylate absorbent gels** (not in direct contact with skin unless torn)
3. **Tributyltin (TBT)**
4. **Plastic**
5. **Latex**
6. **Fragrance**

What is wrong with the above stated ingredients?

1. **Chlorine** is a carcinogenic chemical,² a skin irritant, and toxic to humans, wildlife and the environment.³
2. **Sodium Polyacrylate** (also known as SAP or absorbent gel) is under scrutiny. The Real Diaper Association suggests that it can cause skin irritation and severe allergic reactions.² It was also removed from tampons in 1985 when it was linked to toxic shock syndrome.⁴
3. **TBT** “A toxic pollutant known to cause hormonal problems in humans and animals.”² It “can be absorbed through the skin and lead to immune system damage and disrupted hormone function.”⁵ Thilon Maack, Greenpeace toxics expert has said that “TBT is one of the most toxic substances ever made and it is being spread throughout the environment. It can be absorbed through the skin and contaminates the environment as well as people. . . it is absolutely irresponsible to expose babies to these extremely toxic substances”.⁶
4. **Plastic** does not breath against the baby’s skin.
5. **Latex** can cause allergies when inhaled or contact dermatitis when in contact with skin.³
6. **Fragrance** is typically another term for phthalates.

Wipes

Baby wipes should leave our babies clean, not leave them with traces of harmful chemicals that can be absorbed through their skin. As author Sloan Barnett says in her book *Green Goes with Everything*, diaper wipes might as well be called chemical wipes. Chose wipes with fewer potential health concerns and avoid wipes with added “fragrance” or preservatives. Wipes commonly contain formaldehyde, propylene glycol, bronopol, DMDM hydantoin and phthalate-fixed fragrances.⁷

What is wrong with these chemicals?

DMDM hydantoin - An allergen and irritant that forms cancer-causing chemicals

Bronopol - Preservative and allergen that can form cancer-causing chemicals such as nitrosamine

Formaldehyde - Preservative that in high concentrations may trigger an attack in people with asthma and has shown to cause cancer in animals

Propylene glycol - If ingested can cause damage to vital organs and nervous system⁸

Diaper Cream

Diaper cream has butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), which is thought to be a possible carcinogen, contributor of hyperactivity and other behavioral problems and therefore banned in many countries; boric acid or sodium borate, which when reviewed by the Cosmetic Ingredient Review Panel determined that it was not safe for infants.⁹

Resources

¹ Barnett, Sloan, Green Goes with Everything, pg. 132

² <http://www.realdiaperassociation.org/diaperfacts.php>

³ www.ewg.org

⁴ Lynda, Fassa, Green Babies, Sage Moms, pg.119

⁵ www.thegreenguide.com

⁶ <http://archive.greenpeace.org/pressreleases/toxics/2000may152.html>

⁷ Fields, K. et al (2006), "Contact Dermatitis Caused by Baby Wipes," Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology 54(5):230-232

⁸ Barnett, Sloan, Green Goes with Everything, pg. 35

⁹ http://cir-safety.org/staff_files/safewithqualifications.pdf