



Tips for Using Cloth Diapers in Daycare

COURTESY OF REAL DIAPER ASSOCIATION
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Your knowledge and enthusiasm about cloth diapers could prompt someone to take another look at reusable cloth diapers!

Finding a daycare provider

When searching for a daycare center that accepts cloth diapers, consider an in-home, independent, church, or university daycare, which often provide more flexibility than a commercial daycare center in supporting individual parenting preferences. Note that, while many centers might not advertise their acceptance of cloth diapers, this does not mean that they will reject children who are cloth diapered. Espe-

cially in light of the current economy, centers which may have previously rejected the idea may now consider it to fill their classes.

Consider calling all the potential daycare providers on your list before you decide which ones to visit. When calling larger centers, ask to speak with a director or supervisor. In this initial conversation, ask if they would

be open to using cloth diapers within the parameters of their health requirements and diapering standards. For example, you might say, "We are currently using reusable cloth diapers at home. Is this something that could be continued if we decide to place our child with you?" Keep in mind that this initial experience with a provider may be an indication of how you will be treated once your child is enrolled.

The Real Diaper Association (RDA) and Real Diaper Industry Association (RDIA) are working to compile a directory of providers who accept cloth diapers. Check their websites to see if there are any in your area.

Terminology

Because some parents are met with resistance due to old and negative associations with cloth diapers, consider using these terms when introducing them:

- reusable cloth diapers
- washable diapers
- modern cloth diapers

Introducing cloth diapers to a daycare center

Very few daycare centers have a written policy regarding the use of either cloth or disposable diapers. This can be good news if you want to help them form their policy for future cloth diaper use!

In your first in-person meeting with the daycare provider, remember to bring an example of the cloth diapers you will send with your child. Many parents have had success showing single-piece reusable diapers (such as all-in-ones or

pockets). You should also bring a wet bag to show how you will be bringing the diapers home each night. Explain how cloth diapering will work in the daycare center. Emphasizing ease-of-use will go a long way in your discussion.

If additional convincing is needed, talk about the benefits of cloth diapers in daycare. If the center provides disposable diapers for the children or if the center is responsible for trash pick-up costs, cloth-

diapered children can help reduce expenses.

Many daycares and pre-schools publicize that they are "eco-friendly." Providing information about the environmental benefits of cloth diapers might appeal to them.

You can find and print information from RDA's Diaper Facts. www.realdiaperassociation.org/diaperfacts.php

Opening a Dialogue

- *Be positive – you are doing something positive for your child with cloth diapering. Avoid criticism or judgment (of disposables) in your discussions.*
- *Be patient – your potential daycare provider may be seeing a modern diaper for the first time. It could take a discussion to help them understand how it works.*
- *Be flexible – you may need to supply a wet bag, all-in-one diapers, extra clothes, or other items to ease the transition.*
- *Be open to a test – if you meet with resistance, propose a trial period. For both the diapers and the daycare, this can be a valuable exercise.*
- *Be supportive – remember there will be a learning period for any caregivers who are unaccustomed to cloth diapers.*

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Recommendation: Be flexible

You may need to be flexible when negotiating. Some daycares may be more comfortable with all-in-ones or pockets, while others may prefer prefolds. Some centers insist that wetbags are used and have a loop for hanging up. Others insist a new cover be used for each new diaper (for a fitted or prefold and cover system). Discuss the options with them. Consider whether you are willing to buy something you don't

already have in order for them to be comfortable using cloth diapers. For example, use of an all-in-one style or changing from snap to hook-and-loop closure may ease the transition. Once you have determined that the daycare provider will accommodate cloth diapering, consider coming to an agreement about compensation if your diapers are mistakenly thrown out as this sometimes happens.

Trial period?

If you find a daycare provider you like, but they are hesitant, you can propose a trial period. During this time the center can see if cloth diapers will work within their parameters.

Three weeks seems to be a reasonable trial period as it may take time to get a routine and achieve proper use. Many times, given the chance, they will come to prefer cloth diapers over throwaways!

Informing yourself about regulations

Know your state's regulations! Click on your state at this website <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>, print your state's regulations, and keep them in order to refer to them until your daycare search is over. Some daycare centers may try to tell you that using cloth diapers is against state regulations, but this is rarely the case.

Although not all providers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, some may claim they will lose their NAEYC certification if they accept cloth diapers. NAEYC, in fact, changed their regulations and no longer require a doctor's note, but allow cloth diapers with proper handling by daycare staff.

If your provider still requires a note, your pediatrician should be willing to cooperate as many children are sensitive to the chemicals in disposable diapers.

The “Inside Poop” on regulations

An issue often cited by daycare centers is proper sanitation practices (i.e. fecal contamination concerns). Actually, the *American Journal of Public Health* (Vol. 85, Issue 1 30-33) issued by the American Public Health Association (APHA) published a study which concluded that there is no significant difference in the amount of fecal

contamination in daycare centers which use cloth diapers verses those which use disposable diapers.

Please also note that the APHA as well as the WHO (World Health Organization) recommends that all fecal matter be deposited into the toilet in order to handle waste in a safe way. This is stated in the in-

structions on most disposable diaper packaging, but it is widely ignored by both consumers and daycare centers [Public Policy Statement #8910 *Health and Environmental Hazards of Disposable Diapers*].