

# Nappy Recycling

## 8 million disposable nappies are used in the UK every day.

None of these are recycled. 90% of disposable nappies are sent to landfill, **that's over 2.5 billion nappies every year!** Although these figures seem staggering this constitutes just **2.4%**, of the household waste stream.

The alternative to disposable nappies is to use "Real Nappies". The most common real nappy is a cotton or polyester wrap which can be fastened with Velcro, with a cotton pad insert. These can either be washed at home or your council will provide a laundering service.

It has been always assumed that re-usables were the most environmentally friendly option **BUT**, is it all as simple as that? The first independent study into this area has researched the life cycle analysis of both systems—i.e. the materials, chemicals and energy used in sourcing the materials (cotton or fluff pulp), transport, manufacture, packaging, disposal and in the case of re-usables—laundering.

For the three nappy systems studies (disposable, home laundered and commercially laundered) there was no significant difference between any of the environmental impacts—no overall system clearly has a better or worse environmental performance. With disposables environmental performance can be improved by weight reduction and improvement in manufacturing, whereas with re-usable systems the user



Photos of real nappies supplied by and used with permission of Cotton Bottoms.

can achieve most environmental gain through reducing the energy consumed in washing and drying.

The wearing of nappies by children in the UK in one year results in the global warming and non renewable resource depletion impact equivalent to 0.5% of the impact from car driving in the UK. **In conclusion, which nappy system parents choose to use should be judged on personal preference.** Try looking at our other fact sheets for more ideas on how to reduce the environmental impact of our lifestyles.

Links:

[www.goreal.org.uk/](http://www.goreal.org.uk/)

Previously called the 'Real Nappy Campaign', has lots of useful information about reusable nappies

[www.ecobaby.co.uk](http://www.ecobaby.co.uk)

A great shopping site that provides parents with natural alternatives to child and baby toiletries—including biodegradable nappies.

