

## News

### Study serves up nappy dilemma for parents

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Parents will need to do more than just think about the type of nappy they buy if they want to look after the environment according to a major study published today (Thursday) by the Environment Agency.

The study, which looks at and evaluates the environmental impacts arising from every stage of the life cycle of disposable and reusable nappies, found that there was little or nothing to choose between them.

Tricia Henton, Director of Environmental Protection at the Environment Agency said: "This study was carried out to establish the true environmental impacts of using disposable and reusable nappies. Although there is no substantial difference between the environmental impacts of the three systems studied, it does show where each system can be improved.

"We hope manufacturers of disposable nappies will use this study to improve the environmental performance of their products, particularly the quantities going to landfill. Similarly, if parents using reusables want to improve their impact on the environment they will need to look more closely at how they launder nappies, for instance, can the nappies be washed in a bigger load at a lower temperature?

"The type of nappy that parents buy is a matter of personal choice, but it is important that they can make an informed choice. Studies like this help to inform people about the impact that their actions have on the environment. Life cycle thinking plays an important role in informing the environmental debate."

For each nappy type studied, all the materials, chemicals and energy consumed during manufacture, use and disposal were identified and the resulting emissions to the environment accounted for.

The study is based upon an average UK child wearing nappies for the first two and half years and is supported by behavioural surveys carried out in 2002/3 covering more than 2000 parents and guardians of children who use or have used nappies. It looked closely at a wide range of activities associated with disposable and reusable nappies which affect the environment. These included:

- the energy and material used in the manufacture of the nappy;
- the daily number of changes required for the different types of nappy;
- how reusable nappies are washed – temperature, size of loads, type of detergents etc.

The study, which was carried out by independent environmental consultants, is the most comprehensive and thorough independent study of its kind ever undertaken in the UK.

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