



Eco-Mum

By Jo Middleton

Breast or bottle, washable or disposable nappies? As a new parent, the choices you make on a daily basis are seemingly endless and, with thousands of apparently 'essential' products available, it can be hard to raise a child whilst maintaining your eco-credentials. So when it comes to keeping your baby green, what really are the nursery must haves?

Breastmilk – the ultimate eco-friendly baby product. We are always being told about the positive health effects of breastfeeding if you can do it - the mantra of 'breast is best' is never far from a new mother's mind! But have you ever considered the environmental benefits of breastfeeding?

Breastmilk is one of the world's most amazing and sustainable resources. Its production process is completely ecologically sound, it requires no extra packaging and it is produced to exactly meet demand, meaning no waste. It's always available at the right temperature, so no extra energy is required to keep it cool or warm it up again.

The whole process of formula feeding however is a long and ecologically destructive one. It begins often with vast areas of land being cleared to make way for soya plantations, used to

produce cow feed. This contributes to problems of deforestation, soil erosion and water pollution, with chemical fertilizers polluting rivers and groundwater.

The manufacturing process uses huge amounts of energy and natural resources, producing equipment and packaging, including bottles, teats and milk tins, most of which will eventually end up in landfill. Resources at every stage, including cow feed, raw materials and the end product, are often transported thousands of miles around the world.

As well as a direct environmental impact, breastfeeding helps reduce waste by delaying the return of menstruation. Every year, we each flush hundreds of towels and tampons into the water system or condemn them to landfill. If every woman in the UK breastfed, we could save 3,000 tonnes of paper alone through reducing our use of sanitary protection products.

The protective health effects of breastmilk are also important, and indirectly reduce the strain on global resources. In developing countries, where formula milk is often made up incorrectly or with unsafe drinking water, leading to diarrhoea and malnutrition, the health impact is massive. UNICEF estimates that 1.5million lives could be saved worldwide every year by breastfeeding. Even in industrial countries, the health effects of formula feeding puts an unnecessary strain on already stretched resources. In the US for example, it is estimated that the hospital treatment of bottle fed babies costs 15 times more than that of breastfed babies.

Who knew you could reduce your carbon footprint so easily from the comfort of your own sofa?

Visit Jo's website at www.jomiddleton.co.uk or her popular parenting blog www.slummysinglemummy.wordpress.com



BIODEGRADABLE NAPPIES

The disposable versus washable nappies debate is one that continues to rage, with environmental arguments being put forward on both sides. Use disposables and you are creating your own landfill mountain, use washables and your washing machine will have a lot to answer for. If you are looking for a convenient alternative, but want to stay as green as possible, why not opt for biodegradable disposables?

Nature Babycare produce a good variety of eco-friendly baby products including nappies, wipes and nappy sacks. You can check out their range at www.simply-eco.co.uk.



GENTLE TOILETRIES

Nothing feels as silky soft or smells as scrummy as freshly washed baby, and as parents, we want to keep our baby's skin in tip top condition.

Green People's award winning Organic Babies range is a firm favourite with many families, containing only 100% natural, vegetarian, cruelty free ingredients. All of the products are certified organic and are perfect for sensitive baby skin. Check out the full range at www.greenpeople.co.uk



SNUGLY BATHTIMES

If you've ever juggled a wet baby in one hand and a small, scratchy baby towel in the other, you'll appreciate just how stressful bathing your baby can be.

The Cuddledry apron towel – designed to take the anxiety out of bathtimes – is worn like an apron, leaving both hands free to safely lift your baby from the bath. Committed to the use of sustainable, eco-friendly materials, Cuddledry towels are made from unbleached, organic cotton and natural bamboo fibre and are coloured using natural dyes.

See the full range of super soft towels at www.cuddledry.com

