



# Zero Waste Baby Guide



This guide aims at helping moms, dads and caregivers to reduce waste while starting baby on a Zero Waste lifestyle.

Welcome babies and congratulations to all from Zero Waste Canada. A zero waste lifestyle is the first step in creating a better planet for generations to come.

Join the Zero Waste movement now.

# ZERO WASTE A GUIDE FOR ZERO WASTE BABIES

## Baby Waste Facts

- More than 4 million disposable diapers are discarded each day in Canada.
- A disposable diaper takes 500 years to decompose in a landfill.
- By the age of 6 months the average Canadian has consumed the same amount of resources as the average person in the developing world consumes in a lifetime.
- Over 190,000 children's car seats are thrown into Canadian landfills each year.
- The average child in the developed world owns 200 toys but plays with an average of 12 per day.
- In a house with a child in diapers, disposables can make up 50% of household waste.
- On average, a baby will use 5,840 diapers in the first two years.



This guide aims to help moms, dads and caregivers to reduce waste while starting baby on a Zero Waste lifestyle.

Welcome babies and congratulations to all from Zero Waste Canada.

A Zero Waste lifestyle is the best step for creating a better planet for generations to come.

**Don't worry it is possible to lead a Zero Waste lifestyle with baby!**



A Zero Waste household can create a less toxic environment, save money and reduce waste and this is possible with a baby in the household.

There are several factors that may cause unnecessary waste or consumption with the addition of a baby.

One of the factors is the rapid growth and development of babies. In the first 5 months an infant can double in weight and grow ½ to 1 inch a month. At 1 year old a baby may have tripled in weight as growth continues. This rapid growth can mean changes in clothing and equipment. In the first year babies make great strides in physical abilities and skills: a factor that also can cause changes in foods, equipment and clothing.

Many families are on the go and convenience is important. Unfortunately single use disposal items may seem easier but they create lots of waste and can be expensive. Many products are marketed to catch caregivers with the promise of convenience when in fact they are not healthy for baby or the planet.

The other factor is too much stuff. Sometimes we go overboard when babies really do not need the stuff. Stuff does not equal caring.

Being conscious of the pitfalls or challenges helps to rethink and have a game plan.

This guide has suggestions that can help you with the challenges.

Remember how many attempts a baby makes before that first step becomes walking if you feel overwhelmed- just keep trying by taking baby steps.





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## Expecting a Baby

Pregnant women should be aware of the sources and routes of chemical exposure in order to minimize danger to their unborn child, even though it is still unknown what effects these chemicals could have, suggests research from the royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (RCOG).

The mature brain has a barrier of cells that stops chemicals in the blood stream from entering brain tissue but the developing fetus does not have this protective barrier, meaning it is more vulnerable to toxic substances.

It has been assumed that the placenta shielded the cord blood and the developing fetus from most pollutants, the reality, however, is that the umbilical cord carries not only oxygen and nutrients but also industrial chemicals, pollutants, and pesticides.

Also, babies are more likely to be on the floor, putting objects in mouths and ingesting dust that may contain pollutants from household plastics, treated textiles and cleaning products and scented sprays. These are good reasons to reduce the use of toxic substances around your house.

### Maternity Wear Suggestions

- Use what you have in your closet or your partner's by wearing baggy t-shirts, sweaters, dresses and men's shirts that allow your body to grow.
- Adapt clothing to fit your body changes. Don't be afraid to cut pantyhose waistbands or purchase a [bra extender](#) to expand your bra. Try making a [belly band](#) so you can continue wearing jeans and pants (unzipped).
- Borrow clothing from friends and family.
- Buy second-hand gently used maternity wear from thrift stores and consignment stores. You can also find second-hand items [online](#).
- If you must buy new, consider items that can be used after birth and think "capsule wardrobe" looking for items that have multiple purposes.
- When buying new consider natural fabrics if possible.



## Gender Reveal Party Suggestions

- Use reusable cutlery, dishes, glasses and napkins
- Avoid single use disposable items like straws.
- Avoid glitter, balloons and plastic party favours
- Instead of paper invitations send emails or phone
- Avoid games that create waste
- Consider making decoration from recycled or repurposed material
- Shop in the bulk food section or choose foods with no packaging
- Make your own Gender Reveal cake
- Don't forget to have containers ready for leftovers



## Baby Shower Suggestions

- Read suggestions from Gender Reveal party.
- Suggest that pre-loved presents are okay
- Tell your guests you are having a Zero Waste shower and ask that gifts are either unwrapped or wrapped in reusable blankets or wipe cloths.
- Give the expectant mom coupons for babysitting, a meal preparation or housecleaning
- Give certificates for diaper service



## Birth

Zero Waste Canada believes that the health of mother and baby are paramount. Therefore it is best to consult with medical practitioners to determine the best birthing method for you.

Reducing waste in home birth:

- Instead of disposable plastic sheets opt for reusable mattress covers and wool pads.
- Have lots of towels and rags.
- Talk to your midwife about supplies and [alternatives](#).
- Have receptacles for laundry and waste ready.
- Have cloth [postpartum pads](#) ready.
- Use a metal or glass straw instead of plastic .

Remember to include in your hospital bag:

- Reusable water bottle
- Reusable cloth [postpartum pads](#)
- Bag for soiled clothing
- Reusable nursing pads

Hospital stays and child birth can create waste. Just do the best you can do in the situation and enjoy the experience. Remember you can reduce the waste you have control of. Consider bringing snacks in reusable containers, using a shampoo bar, and using products with less packaging.



## Zero Waste Baby



### The Diaper Dilemma

Disposable diapers create lots of waste but they also use lots of resources during production. Plus the material make up may be exposing babies to harmful chemicals.

Most disposable diapers are made with an outer layer of a polyethylene film, followed by an inner liner of polypropylene and an absorbent center containing wood pulp (usually bleached white with chlorine), and super-absorbent polymers such as [sodium polyacrylate](#).

It takes 3.4 billion gallons of fuel oil every year to make disposable diapers. Disposable diapers use 20 times more raw materials, two times more water and three times more energy than cloth diapers.

On average, a baby will use 5,840 diapers in the first two years.

Cloth diapers can be washed and reused; and [they save money](#).

This guide will give tips to make it easier for you to use cloth diapers.



If you decide to use disposable diapers we ask that you consider reducing the number of disposable diapers and replace them with cloth diapers where you can. Also follow instructions of diaper packaging and be sure to dispose of fecal matter in the toilet. Check local rules for discarding disposable diapers. [Toronto](#) allows diapers and sanitary napkins in green bins, Vancouver takes disposable diapers in garbage.

## Cloth Diapers Suggestions

- Buy second hand diapers.
- Consider using a diaper service if convenience is a factor (Commercial laundered reusable diapers can use less water).
- Invest in several [wet bags](#) to carry in diaper bag for using cloth diapers on the go or [make your own](#).
- Sprinkle baking soda in wet bags to reduce any odour.
- Shake fecal matter into the toilet.
- Remember, if you are camping or travelling, you can always [hand-wash diapers](#).
- Carry reusable cloth wipes for clean up.

## Diaper-Free Baby

“Baby Elimination Communication” is also known as “infant potty training”, “natural infant hygiene” or “diaper-free”. It is the practice of learning baby’s “potty” cues and timing to teach the baby that the toilet or potty is the place to pee or poo.

Sites like [Diaper Free Baby](#) have information on this technique.



## Clothing Suggestions

- Buy second hand clothing.
- When gently used clothing has been out-grown, pass it on to a thrift store or friend.
- Learn how to remove [stains](#).
- Learn to live with or [disguise stains](#).
- Consider [refashioning](#) outgrown clothing.

## Equipment Suggestions

- Rethink which gadgets you will use.
- If using a second-hand crib make sure to check the crib slats. There should be no more than 2-3/8" space between them (about the width of a soda can). Decorative cut-outs in the headboard and footboard also pose a safety hazard. If the crib has corner posts, they should not be higher than 1/16". All crib pieces should fit together tightly.
- If you are buying any second-hand baby equipment, check for product [recalls](#) before buying.
- Before buying or using a second-hand car seat, check the [expiry date](#). Children's car seats and booster seats should not be used past their expiry or useful life date. Beyond this date, the car seat should be permanently discarded rather than donated or given to friends or relatives. Check for [car seat recycling programs](#) in your area before landfilling.
- Consider [renting baby equipment](#).
- Check if there is a [library](#) in your community that lends baby equipment.
- Share equipment with another family.
- Participate in a baby equipment and clothing swap.
- [Repurpose](#) outgrown furniture.
- Consider buying furniture that has [multiple purposes](#).



## Food Suggestions

- Breast-feed if possible.
- Store expressed breast milk in glass or BPA-free containers with lids. Fill individual containers with the milk your baby will need for one feeding. You might start with 2 to 4 ounces (59 to 118 milliliters), and then adjust as needed. Also consider storing smaller portions – 1 to 2 ounces (30 to 59 milliliters) – for unexpected situations or delays in regular feedings.
- [Freeze breast milk](#) to allow caregivers access to high quality expressed milk. Remember to leave room for expansion of milk as it freezes. Frozen breast milk can be stored up to 5 months in the freezer.
- [Make your own baby food](#).
- If you are buying baby food, look for packaging that you can recycle in your community.
- [Freeze batches of baby food](#). Remember to keep the portions small.
- Shop for fruits and veggies from farmers' markets to reduce packaging.
- Resist convenience foods, as they usually have lots of packaging.
- Use those [baby food leftovers](#).
- Use reusable [baby food squeeze pouches](#).
- Compost any food discards.
- [Make dog treats](#) from leftover baby food.



## Baby Care Suggestions

- Instead of disposable wipes use cloths.
- [Make your own baby wipes.](#)
- Read labels of shampoo and soap. Remember to look for mild non-toxic products.
- Use cornstarch instead of baby powder.
- Regular baby oil is petroleum-based and packed with artificial fragrances! Use coconut oil or olive oil instead.
- [Make your own natural baby care products.](#)
- If you are purchasing products, shop for products with no packaging or packaging that can be easily recycled in your community.

## Toys

- Rethink how many toys your baby actually needs. Less is best!
- Remember that wooden spoons, pots and pans and even cardboard boxes create lots of adventures for young children.
- Buy durable, non-toxic toys.
- Borrow toys from a [toy library](#).
- [Rent toys.](#)
- Consider [organizing a toy swap](#) as your child outgrows its toys.
- Donate clean gently used toys.
- Remember to clean toys regularly and look for loose bits.
- [Repurpose old toys.](#)
- Learn to [repair toys](#).
- If you are planning on having more children or if a family member is having children, save toys and pass them along.



Thank you for taking time to read this guide. To find even more ideas how you live a Zero Waste lifestyle connect with us by subscribing to our [newsletter](#).

You can also become a [member of Zero Waste Canada](#) and help us create a world without waste.

