

Eco-Friendly Baby Booklet



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Baby Aspects

Introduction

What sort of legacy do you want to leave your children?

Let's go on a journey together to make positive changes for our children and the children in the future.

Being ecofriendly is a mindset. It's about asking questions and making positive changes in your life. Parenting transforms your thinking. Now you have a child or are about to have one I am sure you want your world to be greener and cleaner in a healthier way. You have made a positive start by reading this booklet.

First, look at consumerism for what it is, strong marketing influences that are everywhere you look, trying to convince you to buy things that often you really don't need.

I encourage you to think twice before you purchase a product. Ask yourself some questions first

Do I really need this?

Is there a healthy, more natural alternative (often cheaper as well)?

Could this product have some harmful effects that I hadn't realised? (for example, breathing in the vapour left from a spray on deodorant or could I have tried an alternative like coconut oil or a roll deodorant that I made myself)

Don't be satisfied to leave things all up to governments to change the world for the better. We each have a responsibility to do this ourselves. Everyone's efforts towards a healthier planet is important.

Hi I'm Julie and I've been interested in caring for the environment ever since I can remember. In fact my first memory of being concerned was watching a television program as a 10 year old child.

The vision I was being shown was of a beautiful river bank where there had been lots of rubbish dumped. I remember being very upset and bewildered by this. I couldn't understand how anyone could do this.

Through my early 20's I investigated everything from biodynamic and organic farming to vegetarianism. I read many books, talked to like-minded people and made many changes in my life.

As a midwife and childbirth educator my interest in babies relates strongly to educating about their environment. I really believe that we need to leave the world in a better state than we found it for our children's happy and healthy future.

I wrote this guide on the whys and how to create that ecofriendly world for your baby. It is not a long and complex guide as this is not necessary. It's surprisingly simple, easy and cheap to create an eco-friendly environment

Marketing companies understand the emotional investment we have in our children and so there is a lot of pressure put on us to buy a lot of products, many of them are unnecessary and sometimes harmful.

I hope to get you to look at what a baby requires (or doesn't require) in a different way. I also hope the booklet gets you to look at your environment (house, garden, surrounding area) and make decisions to clean up these areas and replace harmful chemical products with more natural sustainable products and develop good environmental habits.

Your baby will benefit with cleaner air to breathe, and fewer chemicals in your baby's contact will definitely mean a healthier start to life. You may well find that you also become more healthy, energetic and enthusiastic in embracing and creating these changes.

I have read and researched the information I present to you over many years. I encourage you can do further research yourself around this information to make choices that fit around your lifestyle.

My aim is for you to have your baby in a healthy environment, reduce your financial burden and to help you to learn to trust your abilities in looking after your baby.

Enjoy

Chapter one

A Cleaner, Greener Home Environment

I'm starting with your home. This is the environment that your baby arrives into so it's important to take a good look around and sort out preferably before they arrive.

The Home Environment

Keeping it clean, healthy and setting up good environmental habits before your baby arrives

I'm starting with your home. This is the environment that your baby arrives into so it's important to take a good look around and create a healthy one. If you develop an appreciation of your environment now and good habits around the things you do and products you purchase you are more likely to continue this in the future.

General Cleaning

Expensive chemical laden products have only been around for only a short time. When I was growing up cleaning a bench top meant wiping it down with a cloth a little soap now we are encouraged to spray products around just to wipe a bench top. Then when the bottle is empty it is thrown away and adds to the land fill.

Ideas: Wipe with a reusable cloth using water. If greasy look at changes in the way you prepare foods to avoid greasy dishes and bench tops. Use a bit of soap in the cloth then wipe. More stubborn stains I use a product called Gumption and I have found it a useful and cheap cleaner when needed to clean anything from showers, baths, sinks ovens (always do a small test with any product) It last for me about a year or so, so it is very economical. Or you can make a paste out of baking soda and try that. Baking soda is a safe versatile product that works well.

If you like to have a pleasant and clean smell around after you have cleaned use a few drops of eucalyptus or lemongrass aromatherapy plant derived oils. Make sure you purchase quality aromatherapy oils and not the synthetic version called fragrant oils which can be quite toxic.

Choose a laundry power that is biodegradable and doesn't contain phosphates. Choose one that is made in Australia and comes in a cardboard box instead of plastic (for effective disposal of the container.)

When I was researching information, I came across a product called soap berries (these are berries that come from a tree, they create a soap effect and according to the reviews, work very effectively)

Baking soda can be used as a stain remover and fabric softener.

So now you have clean house and clothes and you working towards a nontoxic environment and have saved money as well.

Think about cleaning out other toxic products from your house and shed while you are at it for example herbicides, pesticides and insect sprays. Look for effective replacements. (take weeds out by hand, pour boiling water on them, make up insect sprays using recipes made with aromatherapy oils such lemongrass, lavender oil, tea tree and geranium.)

Shopping

Another product that I came across in my research was a set of bags for storing fruits and vegetables in the fridge. The bags (reusable) maintained an environment where the produce keeps fresh for a longer period time therefore less waste, no plastic bags. (The Swag Bag)

I do use another product that you take to the shops along with your reusable shopping bags. They are little net bags with a drawer string that you place the fruit and vegetables in (no plastics bags needed) In our area the supermarkets are not supplying the plastic bags for grocery items. These need to be purchased. Hopefully consumers will remember to bring in their bags each time they shop. My disappointment here is they are still supplying plastic bags for sale (as well as non-plastic ones) They are potentially not going to last as long as the others (I've had some of my shopping bags for years) and they still need to be disposed of.

I keep mine in the boot of the car, try always to do a visit to the shops on my way home as I go past the shops avoiding extra trips in the car. I also buy smaller amounts of food more frequently. This save throwing out a lot of food needing to be thrown away.

I'm sure it means more nutritional value as well to have food as fresh as possible.



Setting up a room for your baby

Painting, Decorating

Ideally a baby's room is used for storing bits and pieces that your baby will require and not as a sleeping area. It is recommended that a baby sleeps in close proximity a parent. (refer to the guidelines rednose.com.au for interesting and educational articles)

If you plan to paint and decorate your baby's room consider paint products that have zero volatile organic compounds (VOC) These are gases that are emitted into the air from products or processes and can be harmful to over all health. If you are pregnant consider having someone else to do the painting.

Look into the type of floor coverings that maybe the healthiest and environmentally friendly. For example, carpet may harbour toxins from the manufacturing processes and in the long-term harbour moulds or dust mites. Floor rugs (organic wool or cotton) if needed on a hard wood maybe a better alternative as they should be easier to clean and they can be aired outside when the weather is suitable.

If laying flooring things to consider

- Source of material (Are precious rainforest being cut down in the process, local or overseas transport miles,)

- How long will the flooring last (cheap flooring wears out quickly, it cannot be re sanded and is designed to be thrown away when showing wear and tear)

- Know what chemicals are involved in the manufacturing or used on the flooring once it is laid (hard wood floors can be coated with non-toxic polish or safe oils)

Baby furniture

Baby Furniture maybe sourced as second-hand furniture (ensure that they meet Australian safety guidelines) and this is a good environmental and money saving options. If you paint or decorate any of the furniture make sure it is the zero VOC paint and allow plenty of time to allow the pieces to settle and air before your baby uses them.

Spend a lot more money and time to research for a good quality mattress.

The mattress should fit snuggle into the cot with no gaps around it. Check that it is made from non-toxic materials such as organic cottons (foam mattresses are treated with fire retardants)

There are a lot more safe, comfortable, breathable options out there than there were available in the past so do your research and spend the money on this important item.

Sheets and blankets should also be sourced from organic cotton or wool for blankets that are needed in cooler climates.

Wash them well before using to rid them of any dust, or chemicals used in manufacturing.

Baby Clothing

First option for the enviro-friendly baby maybe the second clothing option. Babies clothes generally don't get ragged looking and so they are a great option for recycling.

The second option is to purchase clothes made from organic cotton. These clothes will be more expensive as it takes time and money for farmers to convert their farming properties to gain certification to organic status. But the benefits to the environment are enormous as well as to the health of the farmer and their families. Pesticides, as well as manufacturing using such things as dyes and bleaches cause a lot of health and environmental so it's worth considering what happens at all levels of the manufacturing and processing of an item you wish to purchase.

Ask yourself next time you are in one of the large shopping chains and you are about to purchase a \$5.00 item of clothing, how much did that cheap piece of clothing cost the environment and the health of the people in the developing countries who are on the farms and in the factories. Did they receive a fair exchange of money for their efforts as well?

Look for products that are covered by the Fairtrade Mark (produced and distributed under an internationally agreed set of standards.)



Other Baby Items

When looking at other items for your baby it maybe confusing to decide what you need to purchase before your baby arrives. Less is best. If there is sometime that you decide you need after your baby arrives it is very easy for most of us to get to the shops, have someone go there for us or order online and have it delivered to your door step.

For example, a baby bath. You may find that having one is not required as you are happy to bath your baby in your clean laundry. I never owned a baby bath and my children and the laundry sink was ideal. Another option is a hand down bath. Baby baths are not used for very long and disposing of plastic baths is not great for our environment.

I often get asked if a breast pump or bottles are needed in preparation for baby arrival. My answer is that a breastfed baby is fed only breast milk from the moment they are born till around the age of six months when they may be ready for starting on appropriate foods (complimentary to and not instead of breastmilk)

Breast feeding should be ideally continued till the baby/toddler is two years and beyond (see the World Health Organization recommendations)

When they are finally finished with their breast-feeding journey they are very ready to take fluids out of containers such as a cup. No need for any teats or bottles in your baby's life. Cost effective, nothing to be disposed and no exposure of your baby to plastics in their mouths.

As a Lactation consultant I am very passionate about breast feeding babies however I also realise that there can be challenges for many women. Quality support for breast feeding women should be so freely available privately or from public revenue.

(Further discussion on this topic will be available on my website in the future)

The Nappy Revolution

You have lots of choices to make when you become pregnant and are planning to bring a new life into your home.

One of the most obvious ones is the type of nappy will you choose for your baby. For most people this choice stops at the brand of disposables on the market and that's it, never considering the alternative of cloth nappies. Why?

Maybe it is the perception that they take a lot of time and effort to use, they are bulky or costly.

The new range of cloth nappies are so much more efficient and easy to use compared with the cloth ones I used for my children when they were babies.

Because of the development of new materials they are a lot less bulky than they were previously and they come in some bright and fun colours and patterns. They are also very comfortable for your baby to wear.

They are not hard to care for at all if you consider that the modern washing machine does most of the work for you. In our summers with lots sunshine the nappies benefit from being dried in the sun, disinfecting and removing any stains naturally. In the colder months placing them on a portable clothes airer is easy and reduces your household bills and takes away the environmental impact of using electric clothes dryers.

Cloth nappies cost more upfront however in the long term are much cheaper than buying disposable nappies. They can also be used for any other children you may have, again further reducing the financial long term burden to your family.

Other things to consider when making the choice is the potential health benefits of choosing cloth nappies. Disposables (unless you do a lot of research to choose a disposable with a minimal chemical load) contain dyes, perfumed fragrances, chlorines and a plastic ingredient called Phthalates all of which are a concern for the health of your baby. Remember our skin is the largest organ in our bodies and readily absorbs chemicals placed in contact with it. Babies' skin is also a lot thinner and they are rapidly growing so these chemicals can have a greater impact on them.

The impact of disposables in our landfill system is huge with disposables taking extremely long periods of time to break down. Solid faecal matter contained in disposable nappies which should but most often does not get disposed of into toilet system has the potential to escape into the ground water causing contamination to our waterways.

Children in disposable nappies can take 6 to 12 months longer to toilet train than when using cloth nappies adding to the cost and landfill of these nappies. The cloth nappies allow a child to be more aware of wetness therefore increasing their motivation to toilet train.

There is a lot of support for parents who choose cloth nappies. For example, an Australian local council has set up an information booklet all about cloth nappies (Casey city council

Victoria) It contains a lot of helpful and practical tips even providing information on resources for making your own nappies (a great idea for when families are on tight budget)

Commercial wipes are only a very recent invention. They have an environmental impact as well as creating sore and damaged skin. It is very simple to use cotton wool and water, or thin reusable face clothes as your baby gets older. Set up in the nursery or laundry area a changing area for your baby with cotton wool in a large container, a small container for the soiled stuff and a container of water (change regularly)

A little bit of organization and you will find that it is very easy and economical, and you rarely need creams and lotions to soothe sore and damaged skin.



Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed the enviro-baby booklet. If it has given you some ideas and concepts that you may not have thought about before then it has met my aim.

It's time for us to look at the bigger picture of what we do on a daily basis and consider the consequences of our decisions. It's only by each of us making better choices that we can create a healthy world for our children to live in.

