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How to change a disposable diaper

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Whether you're using a conventional disposable diaper or a [more earth-friendly option](#), the basic method for changing a dirty one is the same. Here's a suggested series of steps to get you started.

In time, you may modify those steps and develop your own preferred method – which you'll be able to do in a darkened room while half asleep.

Preparation

Wash and dry your hands, or clean them with hand sanitizer or a baby wipe.

Set up a warm, clean area to change your baby. If you're not using a changing table, consider laying a blanket, towel, or changing mat on the floor or bed.

Grab your supplies, including a clean diaper and plenty of wipes or wet cloths. For babies with sensitive skin, you can use lukewarm water and cut-up paper towels (use thick ones) or washable cloth baby wipes (you can buy or make these). If your baby is prone to [diaper rash](#), keep rash cream or petroleum jelly on hand.

Safety note: If you change your baby on an elevated surface such as a changing table or bed, be sure to keep one hand on your baby at all times. Most changing tables have a strap you can use to secure your baby. Whether your baby is strapped in or not, don't leave your baby unattended for even a second. Babies at any age can squirm off the table when you least expect it.

1. Open up a new clean diaper and place the back half (the half with tabs on either side) under your baby. The top of the back half should come up to your baby's waist. Now the clean diaper is ready to go – and is there to protect your changing table from getting dirty. (If your baby's dirty diaper is a big mess, you might want to lay a cloth, towel, or disposable pad under your baby instead of the clean diaper while you clean up your baby.)
2. Unfasten the tabs on the dirty diaper. To prevent them from sticking to your baby, fold them over.
3. Pull down the front half of the dirty diaper. If your baby is a boy, you might want to cover his penis with a clean cloth or another diaper so he doesn't pee on either of you.
4. If there's poop in the diaper, use the front half of the diaper to wipe the bulk of it off your baby's bottom.
5. Fold the dirty diaper in half under your baby, clean side up. (This provides a layer of protection between the clean diaper and your baby's unclean bottom.) To do this, you'll need to lift your baby's bottom off the table by grasping both ankles with one hand and gently lifting upward.
6. Clean your baby's front with a damp baby wipe, cloth, or gauze. If your baby's a girl, wipe from front to back (toward her bottom). This helps keep bacteria from causing [an infection](#).
7. If your baby [pooped](#), grab another wipe and clean her bottom. You can either lift her legs or roll her gently to one side then the other. Be sure to clean in the creases of your baby's thighs and buttocks, too.
8. Let your baby's skin air dry for a few moments or pat it dry with a clean cloth. To help treat or prevent [diaper rash](#), you may want to apply rash cream or petroleum jelly. (The best defense against diaper rash is a dry bottom, achieved through regular diaper checks and changes.)
9. Remove the dirty diaper and set it aside. If you followed step one, the clean one should be underneath your baby, ready to go.



10. Pull the front half of the clean diaper up to your baby's tummy. For a boy, be sure to point the penis down so he's less likely to pee over the top of the diaper.



11. If your baby is a newborn, avoid covering the [umbilical cord stump](#) until it's dried and fallen off. You can buy special disposable diapers with a notch cut out for the stump or fold down the front half of a regular diaper.



12. Make sure that the part of the diaper between your baby's legs is spread as wide as seems comfortable. Too much bunching in that area can cause chafing and discomfort.



13. Fasten the diaper at both sides with the tabs. The diaper should be snug but not so tight that it pinches. Make sure the tabs aren't sticking to your baby's skin.



14. All changed!



15. Dress your baby and put her in a safe place – like on the floor with a toy or in her crib – while you clean up the diaper changing area.



16. Fold up the dirty diaper and fasten it closed with its tabs, then put it in the trash or diaper pail. If it's [flushable](#) or [compostable](#), dispose of it according to the manufacturer's guidelines.



17. Wash your hands thoroughly, or use hand sanitizer if you can't get to a sink. That's it, you're done!

