



# Changing Diapers

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Becoming a parent usually involves changing a lot of diapers—as many as 8 to 12 a day once you get into the swing of things. Most U.S. parents will go through nearly 3,000 diapers during their baby's first year alone and average six diaper changes a day for an estimated total of 8,000 over the course of a baby's diaper-wearing career.

From choosing a good spot to change your baby's diaper to perfecting your technique, there are ways to make it easier.



## Location, location, location

Wherever you choose to change your baby's diaper—whether it's on your brand-new changing table or next to you on your bed—you'll want to prepare the area so everything you need is accessible. At a minimum, this means a diaper and something to wipe with. Changing tables are clearly the norm when it comes to location.

Some people, one of us included, even opt to have more than one around the house. As convenient as they may be, you should be aware, if you aren't already, that changing tables aren't really necessary. If you decide you don't want your diaper changing to be limited geographically by where your changing table happens to be, or you want to save yourself the expense, simply consider keeping diapers accessible in convenient locations around the house (and in the car, once you start to venture out). That way, you can limit how far you have to go to take care of business.

## Changing pads

Some people opt to use a simple diaper-changing pad in lieu of the table, and the floor, bed, or couch or even the back seat of your car can easily serve the same purpose once you are comfortable with the routine. That said, some particularly messy episodes might require not only a new diaper but also an extra pair of hands, a new outfit, and even a trip to the tub. On such occasions, you'll be much better off if you choose your changing station close to all your supplies.

Disposable changing pads, available in most drugstores and sometimes referred to as *bed liners*, *underpads*, or "chux," can be helpful in protecting your changing table, crib, bed, floor, or wherever else you may choose to set up shop. These are especially good when you're away from home because they can be used first as a changing pad and then to wrap the dirty diaper for a quick and easy disposal. If you're at home and don't mind a bit of extra laundry, a towel can easily serve the same purpose.

## The technique

Before starting to change your baby's diaper, keep in mind that some babies have a tendency to pee as soon as they are exposed to open air. By keeping them relatively covered as much as you can during the course of a diaper change, you can help keep yourself, your changing surface, and your baby's clothes from getting unnecessarily wet.

If your baby is cooperative, which most babies are at least until they learn how to roll (somewhere around four months of age), you can first lift their legs with one hand. Using your other hand, place an opened clean diaper under their still-diapered bottom. Make sure you have the picture side of the new diaper in front, face down on the changing surface, and the side with the tabs underneath your baby.

Once you have your clean diaper appropriately positioned, go ahead and unfasten the old diaper. Wipe your baby's bottom with the front (inner side) of it as you remove it. While you clearly don't have to wipe with the old diaper while taking it off, doing so often removes a significant amount of poop before you reach for your first baby wipe.

If the old diaper isn't overwhelmingly messy, leaving it folded over on itself but still under your baby's bottom can help prevent their still-dirty bottom from getting the new diaper soiled before you've had the chance to clean them up. It can also serve to absorb any new pee that may present itself during the uncovered stage of the diaper change. Next, wipe your baby's bottom and surrounding dirty areas with a baby wipe (</English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/A-Word-on-Wipes.aspx>), moist tissue, or washcloth.

Then remove the old diaper, along with the wipes, from underneath your baby and find a "safe" place to set them so you don't end up with your baby's foot in poop or find yourself with a new mess to clean up after accidentally knocking the diaper and its contents onto the floor.

Securing the new diaper simply involves making sure that the front of the diaper is centered between the legs and pulled up to at least the same level in the back that it is in the front—usually around the level of the belly button. Check to see that the tabs are evenly secured in the front so there aren't any gaps around the hips.

Also, to help prevent leakage, make sure the fringe around the legs isn't tucked into the diaper's elastic edges.

## A word on changing a boy's diaper

Baby boys are notorious for indiscriminately spraying their parents, grandparents, and pediatricians. Simply being aware of this inherent hazard can help limit the amount of time you leave yourself vulnerable during a diaper change. So can holding your hand, a diaper, or a tissue over your baby's penis during the process.

If you find yourself caught in the line of fire, take comfort in knowing it happens to the best of us. While it may not help you much, those of us in the medical profession who have been peed on more than once find some comfort in reminding ourselves that urine is, after all, a sterile bodily fluid. If you can get the diaper on without being doused but nevertheless find yourself faced with urine sneaking out of your baby boy's diapers, you can also try aiming his penis downward before covering it with the diaper.

## More information

- [HealthyChildren.org: Diapers & Clothing \(/English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/default.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/baby/diapers-clothing/Pages/default.aspx)
- [Ask the Pediatrician: Are changing tables in all men's public rest rooms now? \(/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-changing-tables-in-all-public-mens-restrooms-now.aspx\)](/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Are-changing-tables-in-all-public-mens-restrooms-now.aspx)

## About Dr. Jana



Laura A. Jana, MD, FAAP, is a pediatrician and mother of 3 with a faculty appointment at the Penn State University Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center. She is the author of more than 30 parenting and children's books and serves as an early childhood expert/contributor for organizations including the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Primrose Schools, and *US News & World Report*. She lives in Omaha, NE.

## About Dr. Shu



Jennifer Shu, MD, FAAP (<https://www.aap.org/en-us/professional-resources/publishing/Pages/Jennifer-Shu-and-Laura-Jana.aspx>) serves as the medical editor of HealthyChildren.org and provides oversight and direction for the site in conjunction with the staff editor. Dr. Shu is a practicing pediatrician at Children's Medical Group in Atlanta, Georgia, and she is also a mom. She earned her medical degree at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond and specialized in pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco. Her experience includes working in private practice, as well as working in an academic medical center. She served as director of the normal newborn nursery at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire. Dr. Shu is also co-author of *Food Fights* (<https://shop.aap.org/food-fights-winning-the-nutritional-challenges-of-parenthood-armed-with-a-bottle-of-ketchup-2nd-e-2/>) and *Heading Home with Your Newborn* (<https://ebooks.aappublications.org/content/heading-home-with-your-newborn-2nd-edition>) published by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

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