

Green Parent Guide

This guide is designed to offer insights to help you work towards being a Green Parent - it's good for you, your family and the environment. Our aim is provide you with informative and/or local resources that make Green Parenting easier! We've compiled these resources from our own research and from local environmentally conscious parents; we would like thank everyone who contributed tips for this guide. On that note, this guide is purely a collection of recommendations and is a living document that will be periodically updated. Please use this guide as a starting point and do you own research to find out what options work best for you and your family.

Trying to be a Green Mom?!

"As someone very conscious about the environment, when I was pregnant I was very excited about the new opportunities to become a Green mom. I planned to do it all - cloth diapers, make my own organic baby food, organic clothes and bedding, no plastic toys, glass bottles. The works!

And then the reality hit once baby arrived. You're tired, you're a new kind of busy, plus we were moving. So some things just didn't work out like I planned, specifically cloth diapers. At first I was very disappointed and actually stressing myself out about it, thinking that I could still make it happen. I am still very conscious about my purchases for baby and try to do what I can, but realize there's no such thing as a perfectly green baby or mom.

So, if I can give you new parents any advice as you look through this guide is be realistic and be gentle with yourself if you can't do everything you planned.

There are lots of choices out there, such as more environmentally-friendly disposable diapers. Guides like this will help take away some of the research time! Have a happy, fun, green experience with your little one!"

– Sarah (Former Green Calgary Employee / Green Mom)



Creating a Healthy Home Environment

When bringing children into our lives we begin thinking more about the safety of our home environment. A very important part of creating a safe home is rethinking the use of harmful chemicals and unnecessary toxins. Many of the products we bring into our home, such as cleaning products, personal care products, air fresheners and candles, paints etc., contain ingredients that are harmful to young developing children and have unidentified long term effects on our health and well being.

The first step in creating a safe space for your children is decreasing or removing chemical products in your home and replacing them with non-toxic alternatives.

- Drop off unwanted chemicals at some City fire stations or landfill sites through The City of Calgary's [Household Hazardous Waste Drop off Program](#).



In the last few years non-toxic and natural cleaning and personal care products have become more widely available in grocery stores, natural food stores and retail locations.

- Look at the [Environmental Working Group Consumer Guides](#). There are a number of informative and useful guides on the EWG website that are designed to help you create a healthy home environment.
- [Green Calgary's Healthy Homes Program](#) is designed to aid you with making changes to improve your home environment. [Sign up online](#) to get started!



Prenatal Classes

There are many different options for prenatal classes. A few of the different class options focus on natural childbirth: a system of managing childbirth in which the mother receives preparatory education in order to remain conscious during and assist in delivery with minimal or no use of drugs or anesthetics). A few class options include:

- Healthy Birth Choices <http://healthybirthchoices.com>
- Bradley Method <http://www.bradleybirth.com>
- Calgary Childbirth <http://www.calgarychildbirth.com>

Another way to prepare for natural childbirth is to seek out a midwifery team to guide you on your journey through pregnancy, delivery and postpartum. In Alberta midwifery services are covered under Alberta Health Care.

- For the full list of clinics/midwives available in Alberta, see <http://www.alberta-midwives.com/aam/>
- If it is not possible for you to get a midwife, but you would still like extra support during labor, consider hiring a doula - a woman experienced in childbirth who provides advice, information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and just after childbirth). The price of this service varies and is not covered by Alberta Health Care. For more information visit <http://www.calgarydoulas.ca/>

Baby

When it comes to looking after our children we are probably most attentive when they are first born and need us more than ever. Although we may have the best of intentions to keep our children safe, many of the products marketed to parents contain harsh chemical ingredients or have been treated with unnecessary toxins that are not safe for young, developing humans. Fortunately, we see more and more research being done to create greater awareness and empowerment around these issues, enabling consumers to make wiser purchasing decisions.

The suggestions in this section of the resource guide are common Green Parent practices, recommended readings, other guides and articles, and online resources.



“Becoming a new parent can often lead to making many decisions on what to buy and how to prepare in those first 9 months (or sometimes baby may arrive much earlier). Maybe you have already begun to research products on the market or perhaps this isn’t your first child but you want to do things differently this time.

When thinking about what you need to buy before baby comes home you can ask yourself; what do I already have or could be handed down from friends? For clothing or other items, keep costs down with accepting hand me downs, shopping at used clothing/toy swaps, or register or look for organically grown cotton (or other natural material) for baby. Another thing to think about is getting a baby room ready in advance using low or zero-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint and non-chemically treated furnishings.



We try to encourage reusing but sometimes that is not possible, especially when it comes to choosing baby skin care products. We often recommend selecting unscented non-toxic skin care products and to check with your physician if you are unsure (ie: sunscreen, diaper rash creams, soap, etc.)

While this is just a short list and barely touches on the surface on what to buy, best to start with creating a list and budget. There will be plenty of opportunities to buy things for your growing baby, so you can usually hold off until baby arrives then go from there.” - Amanda from edamamekids.com

Personal Care Products

There are so many different personal care products for babies – but babies do not need a whole variety of different items. Just because a product has the word “baby” on the label doesn’t necessarily mean that the product contains truly baby safe ingredients. Use caution when purchasing personal care products, look out for “greenwashing” or “natural” labeling and always check the ingredients listings.

- EWG’s 2012 Guide to Healthy Cleaning: <http://www.ewg.org/guides/cleaners>
- EWG’s Skin Deep Cosmetics Database: <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>
- EWG’s Skin Deep Sunscreens 2012: <http://www.ewg.org/2012sunscreens/>
- EWG’s personal care products: <http://www.ewg.org/skindeep/top-tips-for-safer-products/#babies>
- Make your own: <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2012/QueenofGreen-babycare.pdf>

More information on toxins:

- <http://www.ewg.org/consumer-guides>
- <http://davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/queen-of-green/fags/toxics/avoid-toxics-in-plastic-baby-products/>
- <http://davidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/2011/01/phthalates-hard-to-say-but/>



Diapering

Diapers are a hot topic for most environmentally-minded parents because of controversial articles and blogs about the environmental impacts of disposable and cloth diaper options. Ultimately, being an informed parent consumer will enable you to make the right choice for your own circumstances.

Cloth Diapers

Cloth diapers are a great option for the dedicated Green Parent. Using cloth can drastically reduce the amount of garbage you send to the landfill and will reduce your child's exposure to chemicals and synthetic materials. Cloth diapers will increase your laundry load and using cloth is not the most trouble free way to diaper.

- <http://davidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/2012/05/having-a-green-baby/>
- <http://davidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/2012/11/green-baby-bums-diapers-for-eco-parents/>
- Cloth Diaper Depot: <http://www.calgaryclothdiaperdepot.com/>
- Brands: Baby Kangas, Bum Genius, Applecheeks, Fuzzibunz, Bummi's, Totbots
- Diaper Service – Happy Nappy <http://www.happynappy.ca/>
- Wet Bags: <http://www.bummi's.com/ca/en/fabulous-wet-bags.php>
- Cotton Wipes: <http://www.babesinarms.ca/>

Elimination Communication

Elimination Communication is a practice in which a caregiver uses timing, signals, cues, and intuition to address an infant's need to eliminate waste.

- <http://diaperfreebaby.org/>
- <http://www.nappyfree.com.au/articles.html>
- <http://ecsimplified.com/>
- Bumbo toilet seat - <http://bumbo.com/>



Disposable Diapers

Majority of conventional disposable diapers available are composed of plastics, wood fibers, synthetics, chemical gels, chlorine, fragrances and dyes. Thankfully, as time goes on there are more chemical, fragrance and dye free disposable diaper options becoming available. A very important point to consider is that disposable diapers never truly disappear. Most articles estimate that it takes approximately 500 years for a diaper to decompose, but who truly knows if they actually do. Reducing waste of disposable diapers (without depriving your child of proper sanitation) is something to keep top of mind. If it's possible for you to use cloth, disposables and practice elimination communication, you will drastically reduce the amount of waste you send to the landfill.

- <http://www.thedailygreen.com/living-green/blogs/organic-parenting/green-eco-diapers-66031101>
- <http://www.keenforgreen.com/b/battle-green-disposable-diapers>
- Brands: Seventh generation <http://www.seventhgeneration.com/Natural-Baby>, Broody Chick <http://www.broodychick.com/>, PC Green Diapers



Feeding

Breast Feeding

The national organization, [Le Leche League Canada](#) has volunteer-run support groups for mothers who would like to connect and get advice about breast feeding. It has been recommended to try to attend a meeting prior to the birth of your baby in case you do not have access to a lactation consultant for a while after the baby is born. Many mothers attend the meeting on a regular basis to offer support and to discuss challenges and success stories.

- <http://kellymom.com/>
- <http://www.lllc.ca/>

Formula Feeding

Although breast feeding is the ideal, in some circumstances it is necessary to use formula.

- Choosing organic formula: <http://www.thedailygreen.com/living-green/blogs/organic-parenting/2726>
- Glass bottles: <http://www.greenlivingonline.com/article/healthy-baby-bottle>
- Glass vs. plastic bottles: <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/baby-bottles>

Organic Baby Food

Making organic baby food is more affordable, easy, no added preservatives in the food and little to no packaging involved. There are now many more options for packaged organic baby food which can be used to supplement the organic purees you make on your own. Look for products with organic certification, few preservatives, low natural sugar content/no refined sugar added and a simple ingredients listing.

- DIY Organic baby food: <http://www.mnn.com/food/healthy-eating/stories/diy-organic-baby-food-on-a-budget>

Baby Wearing

Baby wearing is using a sling or baby carrier. For many parents this is a more comfortable option than carrying the infant car seat or using a stroller.

- <http://www.ergobaby-canada.com/>
- <http://www.babesinarms.ca/>
- <http://www.meitababy.com/>



Clothing

Whenever we talk with new mothers about what they receive the most of for gifts they say, “clothes”! We recommend looking for clothes second hand – since most of the clothes are barely worn and you can get them for a fraction of the cost to purchase new. [Kijiji](#) is a great way to purchase gently used baby clothing as well as local kids’ consignment stores. Look for clothing made from organic materials, no synthetic dyes and fabrics not treated with chemical flame retardants.



- <http://www.onceuponachild.com/>
- Clothing swaps <http://www.motherofallswaps.com/> (probably many other smaller ones)
- <http://www.babyguidetocalgary.com/events/sales.htm>

Nursery

Preparing a nursery is an exciting part of getting ready for baby; there's choosing a theme, colors, furnishings and other accessories to get the setting just right. Look for no VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) paints; they are becoming much more widely available and protect your little one from inhaling harmful chemical fumes. When searching for furnishings keep in mind that products that are not treated with chemicals can be more expensive, unless you find good quality gently used items.

- Hidden Dangers in your Baby's Nursery: <http://healthychild.org/hidden-dangers-in-your-babys-nursery/>

Bedding

Many conventionally produced mattresses contain synthetic materials and are treated with chemicals, such as flame retardants, unnecessarily exposing us to a variety of unidentified toxins. There are organic mattress options available for cribs, toddler beds and children's beds at most local retailers. Mattresses are not an inexpensive purchase so it's worth while to spend some time searching out the options before making a decision. There are also often good quality/organic fibre crib mattresses for sale on kijiji at a fraction of the original cost.

- [Kijiji Calgary](#)
- Calgary Mattress Makers: <http://www.calgarymattressmakers.ca/>
- Essentia Natural Memory Foam: <http://www.myessentia.com/>

Laundering

Choosing which laundry soap to purchase is an important decision considering clothing, bedding, receiving blankets and cloth diapers are in contact with your child's sensitive skin all day, every day. Look for brands that are third party certified ([Eco Logo](#)) non-toxic, hypoallergenic, fragrance and dye free, and disclose the full ingredients listing of their products. If any cleaning product claims that it is non-toxic, fragrance free or green and doesn't include the full ingredients list, assume the product is not living up to its claims. Also beware of fake certification logos and greenwashing, marketing schemes are quite common when it comes to cleaning products.

- Claudia's Choice Laundry Powder: <http://www.claudiaschoices.ca/store/>
- Nature Clean Laundry Powder: http://www.naturecleanliving.com/laundry_powder
- Seventh Generation Laundry Powder: <http://www.seventhgeneration.com/Laundry-Detergents>
- Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap: <http://www.drbronner.com/>
- Make your own green cleaners: Green Calgary's [Green Cleaning Guide](#)



Naturopathic Medicine

Naturopathic Medicine for Children

Dr. Marnie Wachtler, Gaia Health Care, a Calgary Naturopathic Clinic

Children grow and evolve quickly, and disruptions in their health at times when they are adjusting to new foods, growing a healthy immune system and developing their own gut flora is preferable to avoid. Naturopathic medicine can support your child in building the foundations for life-long health and vitality.

Conditions such as eczema, dermatitis, difficulty with learning and attention, digestive disorders, acne, asthma, fevers, colds, colic, thrush and allergies are common problems amongst children that can be treated successfully with naturopathic medicine. The Doctors may consult on infant nutrition and depending on the clinic, can run a variety of tests that diagnose food & environmental sensitivities.

Counseling in optimal infant nutrition with Naturopathic Doctors can guide you through the healthy introduction of foods, advise on nutritious infant formulas and ease teething with natural remedies. Treatment plans are designed to be gentle on the child's system and focus on healing the whole body, reducing inflammation and getting to core of the solution.

Introduction to naturopathic medicine at a young age is an excellent way to incorporate fundamental values of health and well being in children – and the whole family. Naturopathic medicine is built on the principles of treating the root cause of disease or illness, healing the whole person and restoring the body's natural ability to heal. With a focus on the doctor-patient connection, naturopaths spend more time with their patients and examine a variety of lifestyle factors when diagnosing. They combine traditional & natural forms of medicine with cutting edge science & diagnostics to provide your child with the best form of health care.

Enjoy the journey...

It's not easy to be environmentally conscious in all of our actions and no one expects us to be perfect. On our journey toward being "green parents", we should remind ourselves that ultimately the decisions we make to reduce our eco-footprint, support local food systems, or be responsible, thoughtful consumers, are attempts at being positive role models for our children and people around us. These lifestyle choices add up, and the more parents that participate in being conscious citizens the more likely it is that we will have created a better, more beautiful future for our children. Our goals short or long term for fostering a sustainable family, community, city and world are meaningful and do have an impact. The easiest place to start having an impact is at home with our children by guiding them to understand their own roles in being engaged and informed citizens. We hope this guide is a helpful starting point and that you will continue to pursue more knowledge about how to actively participate in nurturing a more thriving future for all.



Additional Online Resources

Green Calgary offers education, products and services to help you create healthy homes and communities. Follow this link to view our other Healthy Homes resource guides: <http://www.greencalgary.org/your-home-and-community/healthy-homes-calgary-resources/>

Baby Shower Registry:

- <http://davidsuzuki.org/blogs/queen-of-green/2012/08/how-to-have-a-green-baby-shower/>
- Tad Poles: <http://shop.tadpoles.ca/>
- Babes in Arms - Registry: <http://www.babesinarms.ca/Products/BabyRegistryandWishLists/tabid/81/Default.aspx>
- Edamame Kids - Registry: <http://www.edamamekids.com/default.asp>

Green Baby Stores:

- Riva's Ecostore <http://www.rivasecostore.com/>
- Edamame Kids <http://www.edamamekids.com/>
- Babes in Arms <http://www.babesinarms.ca/>
- Kacz Kids <http://kaczkids.com/>
- Community Natural Foods <http://www.communitynaturalfoods.com>

Toys:

- Plan Toys: <http://www.plantoys.com/>
- Livingston and Cavel Extraordinary Toys: <http://www.extraordinarytoys.com/>
- Sophie the Giraffe: <http://www.sophiegiraffeusa.com/index.html>
- Melissa and Doug: <http://www.melissaanddoug.com>

Mommy's Postpartum Supplies:

- <http://www.mamagoddessbirthshop.ca/>
- http://www.goddessmoons.com/?page_id=2

Support Services:

- No Crib for a Bed – Collection of crib necessities for new parents who can't afford the basics
- http://neighbourlinkcalgary.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=15
- Made by Momma – Non –profit and Registered Charity to help families facing situations of adversity by providing support in the form of homemade meals and baked goods, new and gently used baby and children's items <http://madebymomma.org/>

Recycling:

- Car Seat recycling - \$10 Levy fee: <http://www.kidseatrecyclers.ca/>

Recommended Reading:

- Birthing Unlimited Magazine: <http://www.birthingunlimited.ca/>



- Ina May's Guide to Childbirth: <http://www.inamay.com/books>
- A Baby Guide to Calgary – Making the Most of Your Parental Leave: <http://www.babyguidetocalgary.com/>
- Baby Food: <http://www.superbabyfood.com/about-the-book/>
- Babes in Arms – Resources: <http://babesinarms.ca/Resources/tabid/57/Default.aspx>

Articles:

- <http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/latest/toxic-chemicals-pregnancy-1212>
- <http://naturemoms.com/blog/2012/04/20/minimalist-parenting-and-the-new-baby/>
- birthingmagazine.com

Baby and Finances:

- www.budgetingforbabies.com
- <http://gailvazoxlade.com/blog/archives/4477>
- http://www.gailvazoxlade.com/articles/life_happens/staying_home_with_baby.html
- http://www.gailvazoxlade.com/articles/life_happens/gearing_up_for_baby.html
- http://www.gailvazoxlade.com/articles/kids_money/baby_see_baby_do.html

Blogs:

- <http://www.momgoesgreen.com/green-links-resources/>

Videos:

- A Wake Up Story – Healthy Child Healthy World
- <http://healthychild.org/healthy-living/a-wake-up-story/>
- The Toxic Baby - Ted Talk
http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/tyrone_hayes_penelope_jagessar_chaffer_the_toxic_baby.html

Green Calgary – www.greencalgary.org

Green Calgary is a dynamic, non-profit urban environmental organization with a mission to empower Calgarians to create healthy homes and communities through environmental education, products and services. Since 1978 Green Calgary has sought to address a range of pressing urban environmental issues including pollution, waste management and resource conservation. As the nature and understanding of these and other issues has evolved over the years, so to has Green Calgary's focus, programs and approach. In addition to providing information and raising awareness, our organization strives to provide the specific tools and resources that empower individuals and groups to make positive environmental changes.

General Inquiries: 403-230-1443 ext. 222

Healthy Homes: 403-230-1443 ext. 223

Green Workplace: 403-230-1443 ext. 224

Education: 403-230-1443 ext. 228

