

Daily Union

Saturday, May 21

People Will Believe Anything!

I would like to believe that everyone knows you can't trust everything you read on the web, but a recent email from one of one of our K-State Research & Extension state specialists, tells me there are people who will believe anything!

In her communication to FCS Extension Agents across the state, Londa Nowadike explains that a series of current tips from unreliable web sources claim that you can sterilize cloth diapers in your microwave. YIKES! Not only is this NOT TRUE, it is repulsive! These same unreliable web sources have also claimed you can sterilize diapers in cooking pots or in your dishwasher.

Do you REALLY want to boil pasta in a cooking pot that was previously used for soiled diapers? What about loading dinner plates into a dishwasher following this recommendation. Not only is this dangerous from a food safety perspective, these practices nearly ensure cross-contamination around your stove, microwave, and dishwasher. As the dirty diapers come in contact with surfaces in your kitchen, the unseen residue and germs they leave behind are a critical violation of safe and sanitary kitchen practices.

I offer this accurate information about laundering cloth diapers from my colleagues at Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Follow these steps for proper care of soiled cloth diapers:

1. To remove solid waste, rinse diapers in toilet bowl. (Be sure to hold onto the edge of the diaper so that it does not get flushed and clog the plumbing.)
2. Collect the day's soiled diapers in pail. Use cold water soak detergent, borax, or two tablespoons of liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of water to control odor.
3. Launder diapers daily or often enough to control odor.
4. Pour diapers and soak solution into washer and spin.
5. Next, use detergent with presoak cycle and spin.
6. Wash in hot water with detergent and diluted chlorine bleach to sanitize and kill germs.
7. Bleach only once or twice a week to prolong wear.
8. Rinse thoroughly.
9. Fabric softeners reduce absorbency if used too often.
10. Use regular dryer setting or line dry.

Dispose of single use diapers in an environmentally safe way -- Feces or solid waste should be removed from single use diapers and flushed down the toilet. Diapers should be folded up with the soiled side inside when they are put in trash.

Perhaps you are reading this thinking no one uses cloth diapers anymore! The use of cloth diapers has become more common in recent years in an attempt to save financial and environment resources – with mixed results.

By the time their child reaches 2 – 3 years of age, caregivers will have changed thousands of diapers. Making the decision between cloth and disposable (single use) diapers is a personal one, with both alternatives having many pros and cons. Of prime consideration in the decision is cost, convenience, and conservation.

Cost:

Cloth diapers are reusable and reduce the cost of diaper purchases as a result. However, the initial expense of purchasing enough cloth diapers to get through a day or two can be a concern. Still, a cloth diaper that has been cared for properly can last up to 75 washings. If you have a healthy supply of these reusable cloths, you can make them last for months, if not a year! Single use diapers cost less per diaper, but with only a single use, you spend more on them over time due to the sheer number of diapers needed. According to Consumer Reports, you can expect to spend \$1,500 – \$2,000 per child on disposable diapers. More “eco-friendly” disposable diapers can run from \$1,600 to \$2,200 per child.

Cloth diapers present extra expense due to laundering. Not only will you need to use baby-friendly detergent, but you will also need to use more energy to ensure the water used is hot enough to sanitize the diapers when washing them. If you use a diaper laundering service, that also adds expense.

Convenience:

Cloth diapers are undeniably more convenient. Once they are used, you simply throw them away. Cloth diapers require some preparation in pre-wash storage and treatment, as well as taking extra care in careful cleaning and sanitation. This takes time, energy, and other resources that make cloth diapers less convenient.

Conservation:

It is estimated that as much as 2% of our landfill space in the United States is taken by single-use diapers. In a recent publication of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, they explain that *“the most obvious environmental impact of disposable diapers lies in the fact that they are thrown away. Disposable diapers produce at least 70 times more municipal solid waste–trash–than do cloth diapers. However, it has not been proven that diaper wastes create a health hazard when properly landfilled, incinerated, or composted.*

Some disposable diaper makers claim that their products are biodegradable. There are no established standards by which to judge the biodegradability of disposable diapers,

so examine carefully claims to that effect. The diaper industry is studying ways to recycle diapers. In some instances, the plastic components are recycled and the paper fiber is composted to make a soil amendment." Source: Diaper Choices: Waste Education Series - <http://www.extension.umn.edu/environment/water/diaper-choices/>

I hope that everyone reading this article is shocked like I am that some folks are using their kitchen appliances to clean and sanitize soiled diapers! Although doing a web search is one way to find out information in a quick and accessible manner, it doesn't mean that it is RELIABLE. For **reliable** information on family resources and food safety, contact me at the Geary County Extension office. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!