

Got Kids? Vegan Toiletries and First-Aid Product Tips for Your Child

When it comes to babies' and kids' hygiene and health products, a consideration for most parents is, **"Is it safe?"** Some parents extend this beyond whether it is safe for their child to whether it is also safe for the environment. After all, our planet's health ultimately affects the health of our children in the connected web of life. As vegan parents, we are concerned about the health and safety of our children, the health and safety of our planet, and also the health and safety of the other animals on the planet.

Many products contain animal ingredients - often in unexpected places. Who knew that baby wash would contain beeswax?!? Another issue is that many products in the toiletries aisle are tested on animals. A third major concern is the shocking amount of toxic ingredients in those products - even the 'earth-friendly' ones. Just because a product passed a lab test on mice, does not mean it will not do harm to your child. So, how to avoid the animal ingredients, the toxic chemicals, and the lab horrors while still keeping your little one clean?

One way is to do your research and only buy natural, vegan products. Google any products before purchasing to find out if they are vegan or carry a list or app of animal ingredients when you are shopping so you can check ingredients.

An even easier (once you get into the habit) and cheaper way is to go DIY (do-it-yourself). This way, you're in control of what touches your child's skin. The following are some helpful ideas if you take the DIY route.

Vegan Baby Toiletry Solutions

Diapers

· To dispose, or not to dispose. The greens continue to argue about whether it is more environmentally friendly to use biodegradable disposables and save all that washing water or to use cloth diapers and save all that landfill space. The solution may actually lie outside of the diaper ... 'diaper free' is the truly green way to go. Also called elimination communication (EC), the practice of listening to your baby for cues that s/he is going to pee or poo is believed to encourage stronger understanding and bonding between child and caregiver. There's also less likelihood of diaper rashes. You save on diapers, wipes and laundry, and, most importantly, your baby is happy. If the idea of going diaperless sounds intimidating, fear not; you can work your way towards complete bottom liberation. EC philosophy extends beyond the scope of this pamphlet and is well worth exploring so do some internet searching and check out some books to learn more. Recommended reads include: *Diaper Free! The Gentle Wisdom of Natural Infant Hygiene* by Ingrid Bauer and *EC Simplified: Infant Potty Training Made Easy* by Andrea Olson.

· Diapers, whether cloth or disposable, tend to be all plant-based. The one thing to watch out for is that some of the protective covers for cloth diapers are made of wool. Plastic covers, however, will work just as well at keeping your baby dry. Another non-vegan item you may come across in the world of diapers is sheep-skin blankets. Why you would want to lie your baby down on a dead animal is beyond us, but apparently

they are used to absorb leaks, have anti-bacterial properties and are soft to the touch. Organic cotton (especially if brushed) or bamboo are soft, cozy fabrics which can be used instead. After any leaks, just wash and hang out in the sun and ... presto ... germs are gone!

· NB: If using disposables, check to find out which brands do not test on animals. Many companies do so that's another major drawback to disposables.

Diaper creams

· Often babies get rashes on their bottoms because of food sensitivities so eliminate any new or potentially allergenic foods from the diet for awhile. If you're breastfeeding, you may need to examine your own diet as well. Acidic foods are often rash culprits.

· Air it out! Sometimes all it takes is 30 minutes a day without a diaper on. And make sure that the bottom is completely dry each time you put on a new diaper.

· Add some baking soda (start with 2 tablespoons and increase gradually to half a cup if necessary) diluted in your baby's bath water to ease diaper rashes.

· Olive oil with a drop of chamomile (for soothing) and calendula (for antiseptic) applied to a dried and aired out bottom will create a natural barrier from irritating urine.

Wipes

· Take an old t-shirt or receiving blanket, organic cotton if you wish, and cut it into whatever size squares you'd like your wipes to be (three inches by three inches tends to work well for small sizes and perhaps a few larger squares for messy times). If you want to get really fancy, you can either serge or use a zigzag stitch to give nice edges. Whatever way, your baby's bum will be happy - just make

sure to use a soft, non-fraying material (t-shirt material, flannel or terry cloth work well).

Wipes solution

· The super speedy recipe is simply to take 1 cup of distilled water and mix with 1 tablespoon of vegan baby wash (or liquid castile soap) and 1 teaspoon of olive oil or calendula oil. Put your cloth wipes in a glass or plastic container and pour the soap mixture over them so they are damp yet without excess liquid.

· This is also a simple recipe which has natural anti-bacterial and skin-protection properties. Simply combine all the ingredients and pour over your cloth wipes.

1 3/4 cups boiled water (or distilled)-cooled but still warm
1 tablespoon of pure aloe vera - check the ingredients
1 tablespoon of pure witch hazel extract
2 tablespoons of liquid castile soap (e.g., Dr. Bronner's)
10 drops grapefruit seed extract
2 tablespoons of olive, almond or calendula oil

optional: 1 or 2 drops of pure lavender essential oil



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Vegan Children's First Aid* Remedies

The following are vegan remedies that will save you buying drugs, creams and other items from the pharmacy. If your child has a serious injury, however, it is best to seek professional medical attention immediately. The remedies listed below are generally safe for children, though it is a good idea to do a patch test on your child before you actually need to use them as some ingredients, such as tea tree oil and lavender, can be hard on sensitive skin. And for babies, of course, the milder, the better.

Bee stings

First, make sure the stinger is completely removed (if it was a wasp, there will be no stinger) and that the child has no severe allergy to bee venom (if so, use an epi-pen, over-the-counter allergy relief or head to emergency). Wash the area well, then you can try one of the following remedies.

- Cover sting area with baking soda and then sprinkle with a few drops of vinegar. Leave on until pain is gone.

- Chew a plantain leaf (a common 'weed' in North America) and apply the macerated leaf to the sting.

- Activated charcoal may be applied externally to draw out toxins and poisons and reduce swelling. Simply wet powder and apply as a poultice to the bite area.

- Calendula is excellent for soothing stings and preventing infections.

- Witch hazel extract can also be used externally as an antiseptic and anti-inflammatory

Minor bumps, bruises, cuts and burns*

- The cheapest, easiest remedy of all ... ice! Keep a small size ice pack or cubes handy in your freezer at all times. Just wrap in a lightweight cloth before applying. Ice must be applied immediately in order to minimize bruising.

- Breastmilk is an amazing healer. It heals from the inside out and also from the outside in. Express a little directly onto cuts, scrapes, prickly heat rashes and other skin irritations, and the natural antibodies and other healing properties will work their healing magic. It can also be expressed directly into the eye to clear up pink eye.

- Lavender can be used on cuts, wounds, and burns as well as for dermatitis, eczema, diaper rash, and pimples.

- Gentle enough to use on a baby, calendula helps to heal wounds and reduce inflammation. It contains antiseptic, astringent, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties. It is useful for cuts, scrapes, bites, stings, bruises, and burns. Make a compress by dropping two teaspoons of calendula tincture into one cup of water.

- Witch hazel has antiseptic properties which will help prevent infections.

Mosquito bites

- A banana peel will reduce the itchiness of mosquito bites. Simply rub the pulp inside surface of the peel onto the bite.

- Mix lavender and tea tree oils together and apply with a swab. Remember small babies' skin can be sensitive, and these oils are quite strong so just try a dab first and **make sure it isn't on an area that your baby will be putting into his or her mouth** like hands or feet (those little yogis can manage the most amazing contortions!). If you prefer not to use tea tree on a baby, try just lavender and some rosemary.

- Put an ice pack on the bite.

- Make a paste by mixing baking soda with a few drops of water and apply to the bite.

- Cut an onion up and apply directly to the bite (again, watch because babies can be sensitive to this).

- Try a dab of vegan toothpaste.

Motion Sickness

- Ginger is a quick fix for motion sickness in children over two years of age. Try as a tea or use candied ginger or vegan ginger candies. Some children find the taste too strong. Often you'll find it combined with some kind of sweetener to make it more palatable – just watch that it doesn't contain honey.

- This is a tasty liquid remedy suitable for children over three. Combine the following herbs and store in a sealed jar:

- 1/4 cup dried chamomile flowers
- 1/8 cup dried peppermint leaves
- 1/8 cup dried lemon balm leaves
- 1 tablespoon dried hops flowers

When you're ready to use, add 2 tablespoons of the mixture to 1 cup of boiling water and let steep for 15 minutes. Give the first dose one hour before the trip. Children three to five can have 1/2 cup one or two times a day. Children over six can have up to two cups per day. [Recipe taken from: *Herbal Healing for Children: A Parent's Guide to Treatments for Common Childhood Illnesses*, by Demetria Clark]

Sunburn

- 5 – 10 drops of lavender oil in the bath will soothe sunburned skin.

- A few tablespoons of baking soda or a cup of oatmeal in the bath will also give some relief (adjust measurements if using a baby bathtub).

- Aloe vera gel applied directly to skin will soothe and repair damaged skin. If you have an aloe plant, simply cut a small piece, slice in half and scrape the gel.

***If your child has a serious injury, you will want to get professional medical help as soon as possible.**

Document written by Heather Steel for Friends of Animals and the 2012 Victoria Vegan Fest. For more info visit: FriendsofAnimals.org * TheVictoriaVegan.com * VictoriaVeganFest.com

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