

Old becomes new

By ELAINE FISHER

STARTING a business selling cloth nappies would, on the surface, not seem like a great idea in an age where disposable nappies appear to have the market wrapped up.

But Kate Meads of Katikati and Paula Lourie of Waihi Beach are proving otherwise with their NappyDays internet company.

They import, test (on their own children) and sell a range of cloth nappies and nappy covers to meet what they say is a growing demand for a modern alternative to disposable nappies.

"More and more people are realising disposable nappies are not disposable. They don't break down and can cause pollution in landfills," Paula says.

There's also concern that plastic nappies may raise the temperature of boys' scrotums, potentially affecting their fertility as adults, Kate says.

A clinical trial by the paediatrics department at Christian-Albrechts University of Kiel, Germany, showed "mean 24-hour scrotal temperature (2880 measurements) was significantly higher in all age groups during the periods of plastic nappy use than with cotton nappies".

The report went on to say "this study shows that scrotal temperature, which closely reflects testicular temperature, is increased in boys wearing disposable plastic-lined nappies".

"The results establish the basis for further research on the impact of increased testicular temperature in infancy on later spermatogenesis."

Kate says many grandmothers are keen for their grandchildren to have cloth nappies because that's what they used.

"Cloth nappies have come a long way in the past 10 years or so. They are no longer squares of terry towelling or brushed cotton folded into triangles, pinned together and covered with plastic overpants," Kate says.

Modern cloth nappies and covers come in an array of styles, colours and fabrics. They are shaped to fit babies' bottoms, are easy to use and wash, and their good fit means they stay on, stay up and are leak proof. Modern fabrics mean the cloth



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NAP OF LUXURY: Paula Lourie (left) and Kate Meads with, from left, five-month-old Oscar and 18-month-old Max Lourie, and 15-month-old Daniel Meads.

NAPPY NETWORK

Kate and Paula are members of the Nappy Network, New Zealand's online cloth nappy advocacy and information group, and supporters of real nappy week held in April this year.

Real Nappy Week originated 10 years ago in Britain through the Women's Environmental Network (www.wen.org.uk) and is now run there and in Australia and New Zealand.

■ For more information about modern cloth nappies visit Paula and Kate's website www.nappydays.co.nz or www.thenappynetwork.org.nz

nappies draw moisture away from the baby's skin, much as disposable nappies do. The nappies come in sizes to suit each age group and include a style which fits newborn to toddlers.

Paula and Kate met through antenatal classes in Katikati in 2004. When Paula said she was going to import cloth nappies from Australia, Kate expressed an interest.

While Paula bought enough to use fulltime, Kate used a combination of disposable and cloth nappies.

By June last year the women had decided to start their own businesses selling cloth nappies.

"Cloth nappies aren't a lot of extra work, nor are they smelly. Basically I empty any poo down the toilet — which is what you are supposed to do with disposables, but hardly anyone does. The nappy then goes in a bucket with a lid and they all get washed every two days," Paula says.

Kate and Paula import a range of different nappies in different fabrics, including synthetic fibres such as microfibre, and natural fibres including bamboo fibre, which has natural antibacterial properties, and pure organic cotton.

The nappies are durable and will generally last for more than one child.

They are not cheap, prices start from \$20, but Kate and Paula say buying enough nappies to last a child until they are toilet trained costs about the same as most people spend on disposable nappies in six months.