

A day outside the Improv

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A stinky diaper, a dad on his own and no changing table

By Christopher Thomas

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MY life

If you happen to work at the Improv at Woodfield Shopping Center and are wondering what the smell was by your delivery door, it was my son's poopie diaper. My apologies, but it really wasn't his fault. Well, of course it wasn't his fault, he was only 16 months old. But it also wasn't my fault, either. If you are looking for someone to blame for the foul odor that was a combination of too much fruit and an upset stomach, then you have to look at this problem on a grander scale.

It was a rainy Saturday and I took my wife's cousin from Wisconsin shopping. I also volunteered to take our son for the day. All was going well and he was in a great mood until I smelled what I feared was going to be quiet a mess. I headed for the men's room. When I got there, I looked around and found everything a bathroom usually has to offer, except for one thing—no changing table. Disappointed, I headed back out contemplating what to do next.

As a woman came out of her restroom, I could see a changing table on the wall. Ah, what I so desperately needed, yet so very far far away. So there I was in the back corridors of the mall, holding a continually worsening stinky baby. My options?

1. Go back into the men's room and change him on the floor. Pros: Semi-private, near sink and garbage can. Cons: Small quarters, no real room to work with people coming in and out.
2. Go into the ladies room and use the changing table. Pros: It's a changing table. Cons: Likely arrested or at least looked at very funny.
3. Ask a random woman to change him for me. Pros: I certainly would have enjoyed not changing that diaper. Cons: My gut tells me that most women are not looking to be approached by men at the mall, let alone a man who is asking them to change his baby's diaper.

I needed a new alternative. So I created option number four—change him in the opening of the delivery doors to the Improv. After all, the sign on the door said Improv, and by golly that is what we did. So as women, men and children of all ages walked past on their way to the bathrooms, my son got his diaper changed. And I tell you the smell in that small corridor lingered. But, hopefully as you can clearly see, it wasn't my fault.

This isn't the first time I have encountered this problem. I have a list of offenders who assume that Mom will always be around to change the diaper. While I certainly wish she would have been for several reasons, she wasn't. And I was left to deal with it in the best way that I can. But just because I am a guy,

does that mean that I shouldn't be afforded the same opportunities that women are in this realm? It hardly seems fair. And what if my wife was with me that day? Should she always have to be the one to deal with the mess because someone thought they could save a few bucks by not outfitting the men's room with a cheap plastic changing table?

So my fellow fathers (and men in general), if you have been down this path before, or the thought of even going down this path deeply disturbs you, do me this favor: Next time you are in a public bathroom, check for a changing table. If it is there, let the management know you appreciate it. If it is not, ask someone why. See if they have a good answer for you. My guess is they won't.

And aside from complimenting or questioning the management, your checking for a changing table does another thing for you—it gives you a scouting report. Take notes gentlemen, remember which facilities shined and which ones were sub par, because when what happened to me happens to you, you want to be in the know.

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