

Cloth Diapering 101

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How many cloth diapers do I need?

A: That depends on how often you want to wash. We generally recommend at least 12 diapers per day for a newborn (8 or more per day for babies 6 mos. and up), and 6-8 covers when washing every 2 days. Also, keep in mind the fact that prefold diapers are very useful to have around for all sorts of things (burp cloths, washing windows, etc.), so an extra dozen or so of those will not go unused.

Q: How often should I wash my cloth diapers?

A: Plan on washing every 2-3 days. Diapers left to sit longer will develop an odor and may wear out sooner.

Q: How do I wash my cloth diapers?

A: It's pretty easy to do! Above all, keep it simple. You will want to use a mild detergent with as few additives (such as 'brighteners' or fragrances) as possible -- additives can build up on the fabric, causing a loss of absorbency or a rough feel. To pre-wash the diapers, a diaper sprayer that attaches to the water line between your toilet and the wall can be handy. It will take care of any solid waste before your diapers go into the wash.

The first step is to run a quick cold wash (some machines call it a "pre-wash") This is when you can pre-treat with a product like BioKleen's BacOut (an enzyme cleaner). Once the diapers have been pre-washed, run a hot/heavy-duty wash cycle with your detergent. Some like to use an extra rinse cycle as well, to remove any possible detergent residue for those babies with extra-sensitive skin.

Now the diapers go into the dryer – make sure to get them thoroughly dry for extra freshness and sterilization. Don't use any fabric softeners on your cloth diapers (in the washer or dryer), as this will coat the fibers and affect absorbency. Do not use chlorine bleach on cloth diapers or covers – this will ruin most covers, and your cotton diapers will wear out much sooner with the use of chlorine bleach.

For whitening, you may prevent stains entirely by spraying diluted BacOut on soiled diapers as they go into the pail. Drying in the sunshine (if you can find it here in PDX!) works wonders, as does an oxygen bleach like the one made by BioKleen. Do check your individual diapers and covers for washing instructions, as some require more gentle treatment and may need a cooler wash or to be air dried.

Diapering Resources Available Online

Detergent Information:

<http://www.pinstripesandpolkadots.com>

User reviews of the various diapers available today:

<http://www.diaperpin.com>

Diapering Dictionary

Diaper Cover (often called a “wrap”): A waterproof or water-resistant cover for the absorbent part of your diaper. Can be reused if not soiled; just air-dry (or rinse under cold water and then air-dry) for the next change. Most commonly made from polyurethane laminate (aka PUL). Can also be made from treated cotton, lanolized wool, or breathable nylon. May close with Velcro or snaps: Velcro closures are more customizable for a great fit, and snaps are more durable and harder for older babies to remove.

Flat Diaper: A large, single layer of fabric, usually birdseye or flannel cotton. Requires a bit of origami-like folding to be used. Grandma would have probably used these.

Prefold Diaper: A flat, rectangular diaper. Has a pre-sewn absorbent pad in the center. Usually made of cotton, and has 6-8 layers of absorbency. Comes in several sizes: Premie, Infant, Regular, Premium, and Toddler. Most will only ever need two sizes: Infant and Premium. To use, fold in thirds and let the diaper wrap hold it on. You may also wrap the diaper around baby and fasten with a “snappi” or diaper pins for a more secure fit. A very economical and durable choice!

Snappi: A T-shaped diaper fastener, used in place of pins. Three hooked ends grab onto the prefold diaper much like an ACE bandage would, keeping the diaper in place under the diaper cover.

Contour Diaper: A contour diaper works as a prefold does, but does not require any folding. It is cut to fit (contoured) around baby’s body. Needs a waterproof cover.

Fitted Diaper: Absorbent and cut to fit baby’s body, this diaper improves on the prefolds and contours by adding elastic at the legs and back along with a method of closure (snaps or Velcro). Very good for containing messes! Can be made from a variety of fabrics, including but not limited to cotton, hemp, and bamboo. Will need a waterproof cover.

Pocket Diaper: A diaper wrap made with a fleece lining that stays between any wetness and baby’s skin. The polyester fleece is non-absorbent, and wicks the moisture into the absorbent “insert” and away from baby’s skin (you may also use a tri-folded prefold in your pocket diapers). Needs to be replaced at every diaper change (unlike wraps which can be reused). Extraordinarily customizable, as you may trade out your absorbency for another choice at any time, doubling up as necessary for night-time diapering.

All-In-One Diaper: As the name implies, all-in-one diapers (or AIOs) contain an absorbent interior sewn to a waterproof exterior. These work just like the disposable diapers most are familiar with, except you will throw them into the washing machine instead of the trash.

One Sized Diaper: Usually a pocket diaper. Instead of coming in sizes, these will have an extra row of snaps or adjustable elastic to allow them to fit babies from approximately 8-35 pounds. Wonderfully cost effective over the long-term.

Wet-Bag: A water-resistant bag made for carrying soiled diapers in the diaper bag.