



Washing and Drying Nappies

Don't be scared! It's really not that bad I promise! You will need to do a bit more washing than usual but with a new baby, there's loads of washing to do anyway so you won't even notice a bit more. And it does get easier as your baby moves onto solids and there is less poo to deal with.

We would always recommend following the individual manufacturer's care instructions but there are a few general rules to follow.



Washing Nappies

Dos

1. Follow the manufacturer's care instructions - this is really important otherwise any guarantee may be invalidated
2. Pre-wash the nappies a few times to ensure maximum absorbency - leave to dry in between washes (although if you just can't wait to use those gorgeous new nappies, you can use them after a couple of washes!)
3. Fold over any 'hook and loop' (Velcro) tabs onto laundry tabs inside the nappy to prevent snagging in the wash
4. Use the liner to remove the majority of the solids and if using a paper liner - flush away ; place in nappy bucket if fleece. You can usually 'sluice' the solids off using the water when the loo flushes.
5. Soaking nappies is not essential and it is best not to soak unless you really feel you want to. You must **NEVER SOAK WRAPS!** This shortens their lifespan considerably. Soaking invariably leads to a heavy, very smelly bucket of nappies to carry to the washing machine - not ideal! If you really do want to soak your nappies, use a solution with a small amount of sanitiser in (not Napisan - use a natural, gentle sanitiser formulated for modern nappies) or add 2-3 drops of lavender or teatree oil to the soaking water.
6. Use a mesh inside your nappy bucket (only if dry pailing - this will not work with the soaking method - another reason not to soak!) - this can be placed directly into the machine so you don't have to touch those poo-ey nappies again -easy!
7. Use a non-biological detergent that is as natural as possible - this will be better for the baby and the environment. There is a bit of a debate as to whether biological detergents are the 'baddies' they are made out to be, but they do contain harsher ingredients that will delaminate the PUL outer waterproof wrap so they are best avoided as over time this will lead to the wraps becoming less waterproof. It is best to avoid detergents with optical brighteners and enzymes. Optical brighteners are only there to make laundry look clean, they are chemicals that literally reflect the light and they can cause residue and build-up and so

increase the risk of allergy etc. Synthetic fibres are particularly prone to detergent build-up so it's even more important to avoid if using these nappies. Some biological detergents contain an enzyme that works by digesting the stains out of the nappies - this is corrosive to bamboo and cotton fibres - it digests those too - and best avoided! There are detergents that have been designed for use with nappies - see Accessories section.

8. You should also use a sanitiser in the wash (if you are not soaking the nappies in it). The sanitisers that are recommended for use with nappies use an oxygen bleaching method (rather than chlorine bleach which would be too harsh for nappies) - Lollipop do a really good natural product for this purpose and TotsBots do a combined non-bio detergent plus sanitiser. This means that you can wash at a low temperature and relax in the knowledge that the nappies will be sanitised and germ-free (and means you can wash your nappies alongside other clothes if you want to). Many manufacturers recommend washing at 60°C occasionally to make sure the nappies are really clean, i.e. no horrible bacteria are left from any poo but to achieve full 'thermal disinfection' (where all germs are killed by the heat) you would need to wash at 96° C - domestic machines don't reach this temperature. Obviously, it is up to you and some manufacturers insist that a 60°C wash is adequate and you might be perfectly comfortable with that. But really there is no point in washing at high temperatures, 40°C is fine as long as you're using sanitiser. This also means less energy will be used and saves you even more money.
9. Modern washing machines are great at getting nappies clean but sometimes you may need to add in an extra rinse cycle to ensure the detergent is properly rinsed out - maybe once a month.

Don'ts

1. If you are worried about staining, don't leave it more than 2 days before washing
2. Don't use fabric softener - this coats the fibres leaving them less absorbent
3. Don't be tempted to use harsh stain removers/bleach - these will damage the nappies. If you want to soak to help remove stains, just use a dilute solution of nappy sanitiser (not Napisan! This can damage 'hook and loop' fastenings and modern fabrics) or plain water. For more information on stains, see 'Troubleshooting'
4. Sodium bicarbonate and vinegar are often recommended for softening nappies but they will damage bamboo and cotton fibres so are best avoided in natural fabrics (you can use very occasionally).
5. If using barrier creams for nappy rash, make sure you use a disposable paper liner to protect the nappy - the creams will clog the fibres, reducing absorbency.

Drying Nappies

Dos

1. Line dry whenever you can - this is the most energy-efficient way to dry. The sunlight will reduce staining and the UV will kill bacteria too.
2. You can tumble-dry on a low setting when necessary but do check the manufacturer's instructions and avoid as much as possible - it does keep the nappies nice and soft but the whole point of reusable nappies is to reduce energy use and waste! (not to mention cost!). It is worth noting that if the nappies are tumble-dried frequently, it may shorten their life-span - this is particularly true of waterproof wraps. Often a good compromise is to pop them in the dryer for 10 minutes either when they first come out of the machine (and then dry either indoors or outdoors) or at the end when they are almost dry (this can be a bit tricky to time!)
3. Use airers indoors - an airing cupboard would be ideal but anywhere with good ventilation is

fine. Some people recommend using the bathroom as the steam will help to soften the nappies but they are also generally fairly damp places so the nappies may not dry effectively.

4. You can dry on a radiator but the nappies can go a bit hard and crinkly (natural fabrics) - a good option if you need a quick turnaround though! And you can always shake the nappies to soften them again.

Don'ts

1. Don't iron your nappies! For a start, life is too short (I once knew a lady who ironed her husband's socks...why??!!) and it may be too hot for the nappies and damage the fabric. If you are really really desperate, you could always use a hairdryer on a low setting! If you really are determined to get that iron out, only ever use on terry and pre-folds which shouldn't take any harm. And NEVER EVER IRON WRAPS!

There may seem like a lot of information here, but don't be dismayed, it really is easy to look after your nappies if you follow these steps - it's easy-pee-sy! (sorry!)