

The Dos and Don'ts of Cloth Diapering

Making the transition from disposable to cloth diapers can be tricky to navigate. We're here to help make the process as smooth as possible for your whole family with some common pitfalls to keep in mind.

DO Buy the Right Size



Buying slightly large diapers may sound like a good idea at first – after all, baby will grow into them sooner or later – but is it really worth the aggravation of your child's messes escaping the diaper all too easily until they do grow into the larger diaper? On top of that, all that extra fabric is just plain uncomfortable; think of how you'd feel with super bulky pants. If you don't want to waste money on diapers you're only going to use for a few weeks, look for newborn-size diaper rental services.

DON'T Underestimate How Many Diapers You Need



It's easy, when you first buy cloth diapers, to lowball the number and end up completely out of clean diapers when it's time to change baby's latest mess. Again, remember that you'll be changing cloth diapers more often than disposables! Newborns go through 8 to 10 cloth diapers on an average day, so building up a stash of at least 20 (preferably more) will give you a chance to get through a day without doing a panicked laundry load.

DO Change Baby's Diaper Regularly



It may feel like you're changing your little one's cloth diaper all the time, where with disposable diapers you may have seemed to have more time between changes. When it comes to cloth diapers, though, it's especially important to change them as soon as possible after a mess. Waiting not only makes it more likely the diaper will leak, but increases the chances of diaper rash!

DON'T Overdo It with the Diaper Cream



Just because baby's skin is red every time you change their diaper doesn't mean you should reach for the diaper cream – it could just be damp, and not yet a rash. Too much diaper cream, or creams that aren't designed for use with cloth diapers, can soak into baby's diaper and reduce its absorbency, which means even more diaper changes and irritation. Diaper liners can help protect diapers from over-creaming, if you do find yourself needing to use diaper creams regularly.

DO Be Ready To Deal with Messy Diapers On the Go



Babies wet themselves whenever they please; it's a fact of life. That's inevitably going to happen while you're out running errands or on a family outing, and you need to be ready to contain that mess; otherwise you get to look forward to Diaper Stink following you around for the rest of the day! Wet diaper bags are perfect for this kind of situation (zip-top plastic bags may help contain the mess, but not the smell, so much).

DON'T Wait To Rinse Off Poop



It's important to get solid messes into a toilet as quickly as possible. Otherwise, you risk stains, bacteria, general nastiness, and poo getting all over the inside of your washer! Disposable liners can usually be tossed into any sewer-connected toilet with no trouble. If you're using cloth liners or no liners, or at a place on a septic tank, rinse or spray the poo into the toilet before you finish changing. You'll thank yourself for taking that extra step later.

DO Wash Diapers Daily



Yes, we just advised building up a stash so you don't have to do a panicked load, but you should still plan on washing your dirty diapers every day. Letting messy diapers sit around increases the odds that poo stains will set before they can be washed out; if that and the stench aren't motivation enough, consider the fact that messy diapers will grow mold and bacteria very quickly if they're not cleaned up right away.

DON'T Wash Diapers with Fabric Softener



When it comes to washing diapers, keep things as simple as possible. Clear, unscented detergents are your best bet, and fabric softener will lower their absorbency rate drastically – the last thing you want to happen to your first line of defense against baby's messes! Scented chemicals also increase the chance of rashes in uncomfortable places. Save bleach for the really bad messes, and dilute it with water when you do use it.

DO Air Dry Your Diapers, If Possible



It may take longer, but air-drying cloth diapers is the best way to keep them in good shape. On top of that, sunlight is a natural bleaching agent and bacteria killer; one sunny afternoon can take care of nasty poo stains as well as adding bleach to the load! If you do run your cloth diapers through the dryer, check the load every now and then to see if they're dry to help prevent fiber damage.

DON'T Use Diapers Made with Synthetic Fibers



When it comes to cloth diapers, natural materials like cotton, hemp, wool, or bamboo are your best bet. Synthetic fibers aren't always the safest or best thing to put near baby's delicate bottom, while all-natural diapers are both softer and safer in the long run.