

Reusable Nappy Tips

Thank you for choosing washable nappies!

Here are some tips on how to get the best use out of your nappies.

How often to change and how to prevent leaks

During the day, nappies should be changed every 2 ½ - 4 hours, depending on your baby's age and on the absorbency of the nappy material, but always straight after a poo. The whole nappy should feel wet when it is changed but if it feels *soaking* wet then consider changing a little more frequently or adding extra absorbency like a booster pad. Always ensure that the nappy is completely tucked into the waterproof outer wrap to prevent leaks. When putting the wrap on, feel around the top of the legs to make sure it covers the nappy and is as snug as possible, otherwise the wet will soak out onto clothes.

The outer wrap can usually be used all day but will need changing if it has come into contact with any poo from the nappy or if it feels very wet from contact with the nappy.

At night, try out your nappy for absorbency – it may need extra padding - and then your baby can stay in the same nappy for 12 hours or more (unless they poo). Babies do not tend to poo in their sleep, only when they wake, so if they go to bed with full bowels, they will fill their nappy shortly after waking.

Cream is not necessary during every change but use it if the nappy area is red. Tea tree or lavender cream, or a combination of the two, is a good natural remedy. Change more frequently if your baby has nappy rash and cream during every change.

Night nappies

These need to be absorbent and waterproof to go through 12 hours plus without leaking. Some materials (such as hemp or bamboo) may be absorbent enough to last 12 hours without extra padding. Other nappies may need extra padding. Pad them up as much as necessary. Suggestions for padding are: prefold nappy, terry nappy folded between legs, a couple of flannels, booster pads, etc. (Booster pads can be bought from local nappy advisors or an online nappy supplier.) Improvise with anything absorbent! Place extra padding at the front for boys, but in the middle for girls. It may be worth considering having a specific type of nappy for night time use and another type for the day time. Make sure the wrap still goes over the whole night nappy.

Nappy rash

Nappy rash has nothing to do with wetness. Most babies are not bothered by a wet nappy at all, although some find it itchy when teething. Nappy rash arises when stale urine comes into contact with the bacteria in poo, producing ammonia. Research shows that the type of nappy used is irrelevant as a cause of nappy rash. A child using reusable nappies may be less likely to have nappy rash, simply because parents may be more aware of proper cleaning of the whole nappy area.

Important things to note:



- Always change a nappy straight after a poo.
- Always clean the whole area, not just the genitals.
- Some children will simply be more susceptible to nappy rash than others.
- Diet also affects it, so consider keeping a food diary if your child gets regular nappy rash.
- Teething is also a prime cause of nappy rash, even for children not otherwise susceptible.
- Try using fleece liners to keep your baby's bottom dry if they have a rash, to prevent it from worsening.
- Change nappies more frequently if they have a rash.

Washing and drying nappies

Always read the garment care label for your particular nappy and cover. Some nappies can be washed at 60° with other washing at this temperature, or otherwise nappies can be washed at 40°. Any velcro tabs should be folded over to prevent snagging.

New nappies should be washed a couple of times before use as this improves absorbency. Use non-biological washing powder and do not use fabric conditioner as this reduces absorbency. Some non-biological powders are gentler than others.

If dried outdoors, nappies benefit from the natural bleaching effect of the sun. However, if this is not possible, nappies can be tumble dried (check washing label as this is not suitable for all types of nappy) or aired indoors (ensure room is well ventilated). Tumble drying helps to keep nappies nice and soft, but it is less ecologically friendly than natural drying and is an added expense. Tumble drying is also likely to reduce the life of your nappies as it may perish any elastic content in the nappy or can pick out bits of fluff in each nappy and so over time reduce the amount that each nappy can absorb.

If nappies are dried on radiators they will tend to become a little hard although they can be shaken out to reduce this.

In hard water areas, nappies may gradually become hard because of the detergents and limescale that can build up. It helps to run an 80° hot wash (no laundry or washing powder, just a cup of white vinegar in the washing machine drawer dispenser) on your machine occasionally, to keep it clean.

Sanitising nappies

Nappies can be sanitised in one of two ways: Either keep the nappies in a lidded bucket half filled with cold water, to which a sanitising agent is added; or store the nappies in a lidded bucket without water and then add the sanitizer to the wash cycle in the machine.

The following sanitising agents are available to use:



□ 1 – 2 tbsp. nappy soak powder. Biodegradable nappy soaks are now available and these are gentler on nappies and the environment. The traditional nappy soaks are harsher as the bleach chemical content could irritate your baby's skin and will shorten the life of the nappy.

□ 5 drops 100% tea tree oil, known for its natural antiseptic and antifungal properties. This may not be suitable for babies with sensitive skins or eczema. It is not recommended with coloured nappies as it can discolour them.

□ 1 – 4 tbsp. bicarbonate of soda. The amount required depends on local water softness – add more for hard water. Large quantities are available from chemists.

□ 1 – 2 tbsp. white vinegar. This is very cheap and available from supermarkets, but does have a bit of a smell! However it is good for neutralising stronger smells from toddler's nappies!

Stains can be sprayed with a specialist stain remover, if necessary, before putting in the nappy bucket. Staining will be worse with breast-fed babies pre-weaning but will gradually disappear. Rinsing through a dirty nappy before placing it in the nappy bucket will stop the nappy bucket smelling. A couple of drops of lavender oil will make the nappy bucket smell nicer.

Outer covers and all-in-one nappies should *not* be sanitised in a *wet* nappy bucket.

Paper or fleece liners

Paper liners are used to catch solids, rather than providing a stay-dry layer. It may be worth waiting until your baby is a few months old before starting to use them because as your baby gets older and the poo becomes more solid there is more for the liner to catch!

Biodegradable paper liners are available and these can be flushed away in the toilet with the poo.

For a good stay-dry layer, or while your baby's poo is still runny, use a fleece liner. As poo becomes more solid you will find it drops off into the toilet easily before the liner is washed with the nappies.

Paper and fleece liners are available from local nappy advisors or online nappy suppliers, and some large supermarkets sometimes have paper liners in the baby aisle.

Baby clothes fitting washable nappies

Some baby clothes are now cut for the slimness of disposables. There are also ranges of baby clothes which cater specifically for wearing over washable nappies but these do tend to be more expensive than the usual high street or supermarket brands of clothing. As washable nappies can be bulkier it helps to look for more generously sized clothes – some high street brands seem to be more generous than others - or buy clothes that do up between the legs at least one size larger. It is also possible to buy vest extenders from online nappy suppliers (which popper on to the bottom of baby's vests and extend the length).

Using washable nappies when you are out and about

It is possible to use washable nappies all of the time, wherever you are, although you may prefer to use disposable nappies for occasional use such as on holidays. When out with your baby make sure that in your baby changing bag there is a waterproof bag to carry home your used nappies in. This could be a plastic carrier bag, a waterproof bag like those used for wet swimwear or a specific waterproof and washable drawstring wet nappy bag (available from local nappy advisors or online nappy suppliers).

Nurseries and child minders should be happy to use your washable nappies on your baby. When you first register an interest with them explain that you would prefer to use washable nappies, offer to show them how to change your baby's nappy (they may be picturing folding terry nappies and using pins without realising how easy they are to use now) and pack enough spare nappies when you take in your baby as well as a waterproof bag to bring the used nappies home in.

Washable nappies should be an enjoyable experience, knowing that you are doing the best for your baby and the environment!