

Punkin Butt Easy Wash System

Simple and effective instructions for how to wash cloth diapers

By Susan Crawford Beil

Diaper services are famous for their ability to whiten and sanitize diapers. You, too, can achieve beautifully white, sanitized diapers laundering them at home. Diaper services send their diapers through 13 wash cycles! They usually wash several dozen diapers at once. We recommend you only ever wash 2-3 dozen diapers at a time, and that you send your diapers through two wash cycles – a COLD/COLD wash or soak, and a HOT/COLD wash. Every now and then you may have to run an extra wash or an extra rinse, but, compared to 13, that's not much to worry about! If you're concerned about how much water and energy will be consumed, check out **The Diaper Dollar** and you will discover that laundering your diapers will constitute only a small portion of your overall water and energy consumption.

Your diapers and their covers were made to last. They are sturdy and of the highest quality. There are a number of products, chemicals and techniques which will help you get the maximum life out of your diapering ensemble. However, there are a few things that can limit their performance, and others that will outright destroy them. To help you become familiar with all the things you should do and should not do when laundering your diapers, we have composed a **Glossary of Diaper Laundering Terms**, including a Diaper Laundry No-No's section. We will repeatedly refer to the terms and recommendations from these pages, so we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the contents.

So here's what we've discovered, through trial and error and a few years of cloth diapering under our belts. We call it our Easy Wash System, and it works with whatever method you choose for your diaper pail option. We give you the basic, most inexpensive way to go, plus some added options to make them look and smell that much nicer. You will no doubt develop your own style and routine, and you may just figure out some things which work better than we've outlined below. But we hope at least we can provide you with a sound and effective method to get you started washing your cloth diapers.

Easy Wash Instructions

First-time washing

Prior to use, all new cloth diapering products should be washed. Wraps, covers and pocket diapers need only a quick rinse. Any cotton or hemp products like the DSQ Chinese prefolds, doublers and inserts require 3-4 prewashes to maximize their absorbency. Be sure to wash and dry 3-4 times. Unbleached fabric requires 1-2 additional wash/dry cycles since there are extra oils in the fabric that would have been removed during the bleaching process.

Some wool covers still contain natural lanolin but to be safe, we recommend using Eucalan wool wash prior to using. See washing wool for more information.

Pre Wash We strongly recommend a prewash or prerinsing of your diapers. This will take care of much of the urine and stool left on the diapers. It's just not a good idea to have the strongest wash cycle be full of dirty water!

Basic plan:

- At the highest water level and for the longest cycle, run a COLD/COLD wash with 1/2 cup Baking Soda. The cold water prevents stains from setting in, while still working to lift the stool from the diaper and wash it away.

Add a nice touch: (one or more of the following)

- **Bac-Out Stain & Odor Eliminator** 1-2 squirts to destroy odors and remove stains.
- **Oxygen bleach** - One or two scoops to whiten and sanitize (change to WARM/COLD to help dissolve oxygen bleach).

Wash

Basic plan:

- At the highest water level and for the longest cycle, run a HOT/COLD wash with 1/4 cup detergent. The hot water sanitizes both the diapers and your washer.
- If you have hard water, add 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar to the fabric softener dispenser, or put it in a Downy ball and throw it in (these methods release the vinegar during the final rinsing, where it is most effective).

Add a nice touch:

- **Tea Tree Oil** – 3 to 4 drops
- **Bac-Out Stain & Odor Eliminator** 1-2 squirts to destroy odors and remove stains.
- **Oxygen bleach** - One or two scoops to whiten and sanitize (change to WARM/COLD to help dissolve oxygen bleach).

Washing wool

Washing Machine: Fill machine with just enough warm water to cover your wool items. Add 1 teaspoon **Eucalan No Rinse Fabric Wash** for each gallon of water. Soak for 1/2 hour. Squeeze gently by hand; BYPASS THE RINSE CYCLE; spin water out.

By hand: Add 1 teaspoon **Eucalan No Rinse Fabric Wash** for each gallon of warm water. Soak for 15-30 minutes. Squeeze gently to remove dirt and water. No rinsing required.

Drying wool

Lay wool item out a towel. Roll up towel and squeeze excess water out. Lay wool item out flat to finish drying.

Never wash wool in cold or hot water. Either extreme will 'shock' the fibers. Never tumble dry wool as the vigorous motion will cause wool fibers to bunch and the heat will cause shrinking.

To the Dryer:

- After the second cycle is finished, your diapers are ready to be dried. Be sure to smell a couple of them – they should smell fresh and sweet. That is, you should smell nothing: no poop smells, no ammonia/urine odor, nothing! But every now and then you will have a load that may need one more wash – no detergent or additives, just a full wash cycle with water only
- Drying Diaper Covers: Any **Bummis** diaper covers you buy from Punkin Butt are chosen for their amazing durability. They will hold up with multiple trips through the dryer. So go ahead and throw them in the dryer – just be sure the Velcro ones are fastened! Wool covers should be line dried. Pocket diapers and some diaper wraps are best line dried.

- Dry your diapers on hot. They should take about an hour to dry completely (AIO's may take longer). When you take them out of the dryer, pull a handful to your face and breathe in the sweet smell of clean diapers – Rejoice that those stinky wads of cloth have transformed once again to clothe and safeguard your baby's beautiful bum!

*If your diapers do not smell clean to you – if you can still detect a lingering diaper odor – you should wash them again. The odor you're smelling most likely means there is bacteria present in your diapers which will irritate your baby's skin and could cause a rash.

Line Drying Diapers:

- Want to cut your energy bill down by 60% and line dry your diapers? Go for it! There's really nothing better than the sun to remove stains and bleach your diapers naturally. And it is rather a pleasing sight to see a line of diapers blowing in the wind. Adding vinegar to the final rinse helps line-dried diapers stay soft. Diapers get their stiffest when dried quickly in the heat of the sun. Hang your diapers in the early or late part of the day to slow the drying time. Or, hang them up in twos or threes so they take a little longer to dry. You can also throw them in the dryer for a few minutes when they're almost dry to remove the stiffness. Remember, though, that if it's too humid out, your diapers may get mildewy.

Storing Clean Diapers

- We all have different styles of ordering our baby's belongings. You may enjoy folding your diapers and putting them away in neat stacks on baby's dresser, on a shelf above the changing table, or perhaps in a basket or a diaper hanger. If you've done away with the changing table, you could put your diapers in the bottom drawer of baby's dresser so they're handy when you're changing your little one on the floor. Or, if it's more your style (or at least the style of your current schedule) just take the basket of clean diapers straight from the dryer and set it next to your changing station. Pull out what you need when you need it. Easy!

Washing Cloth Diapers at a Laundromat

Good for you! Cloth diapers are a great way to go for your baby and our world, but having to go to a laundromat adds to the load, so to speak. But it is possible! The good news about laundromat washing is that those huge front-loading machines can wash about 50 diapers at a time - and they're easier on your diapers than a top-loading machine. So you can get about 6 days' worth of diapers clean and keep them in good shape!

There are two approaches to washing your diapers at a laundromat: 1) spend minimal time at home, but more money and time at the laundromat, or 2) spend more time at home, but less time and money at the laundromat.

Option #1: Less Time at Home, More at Laundromat

There is still a little more work with this method than with home laundering, but not much. Basically, we suggest that you rinse out each and every diaper – wet and dirty alike – and then use a dry pail to store them. Rinsing them all gets a head start on cleaning them and helps keep odors down. Sprinkling Baking Soda on them every few diapers will also keep odors down. You may want to have two nylon totes to help you store these during the week. Then when laundry day comes, you will have two (slightly heavy) bags of wet, pre-rinsed diapers. At the laundromat, follow these suggestions from the Easy Wash system and wash your diapers twice:

Wash #1

Basic plan:

- Run a COLD/COLD wash cycle with 1/2 cup Baking Soda. The cold water prevents stains from setting in, while still working to lift the stool from the diaper and wash it away.

Add a nice touch:

- **Bac-Out Stain & Odor Eliminator** 1-2 squirts to destroy odors and remove stains.
- **Oxygen bleach** - One or two scoops to whiten and sanitize (change to WARM/COLD to help dissolve oxygen bleach).

Wash #2

Basic plan:

- Run a HOT/COLD wash with 1/2 cup detergent. The hot water sanitizes both the diapers and your washer.
- If you have hard water, add 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar to the fabric softener dispenser, or put it in a Downy ball and throw it in (these methods release the vinegar during the final rinsing, where it is most effective).

Add a nice touch:

- **Tea Tree Oil** – 3 to 4 drops

To the dryer:

- Remove wraps, pocket diapers, and totes to line dry at home – or pop them in the dryer for the first 10 minutes.
- Dry diapers on hot – they should be dry in an hour (AIO's may take longer)

Option #2:

More Time at Home, Less at the Laundromat: The Dry Diaper Method

This is a great idea we read about in a book called Diaper Changes, by Theresa Rodriguez Farris. She calls it the “dry diaper” method. It involves soaking your diapers in a bucket overnight, rinsing and wringing them out to a damp dry, then air drying them. Here are the steps:

1. Find a bucket that has a locking lid - the kind that your generic laundry detergent comes in, or the square lidded, food-grade type. For the latter, stop at a bakery or a bulk health foods store and see if they'll give you one, or sell you one for a buck or two.
2. With about a day or two's worth of diapers in your bucket, fill to the top with very hot water. With the water, add 1/4 cup of Baking Soda. A scoop or two of oxygen bleach will do fabulous things to whiten your diapers – and disinfect them. So will **Bac-Out Stain & Odor Eliminator**. Soak diapers for several hours - overnight works well. If you don't like the idea of a full bucket of water, just do a few diapers at a time in a smaller container that you can keep out of reach. Never soak diapers in detergent or chlorine bleach!
3. After their good, long soak, rinse and squeeze diapers damp dry. If you've used oxygen bleach, be sure you really rinse them well, as oxygen bleach should be completely out of your diapers before they're dried. If you're going to the laundromat that day, just throw the diapers in a nylon tote and

they'll be ready to go.

4. If it's going to be a few days til laundry day, hang dry them to make that fateful day a breeze: hang your pre-washed, fully soaked diapers on a small clothes rack near your window or in your tub. The sunlight helps kill germs and deodorize.

5. Once dry, place in a nylon tote to await laundry day. When that day arrives, you will have a nice pile of dry, halfway clean, pre-soaked diapers.

6. For your wraps and covers, let them air out between uses. For soiled covers or covers that start to smell, hand wash and line dry. Throw them all in with the diapers on wash day to get them a good washing at least once a week. Just be sure to line dry for maximum effectiveness and longevity.

7. Once at the laundromat, wash your diapers in hot water with half the recommended detergent – too much detergent can add a residue build up to your diapers that will make them less absorbent. Add ½ cup white vinegar in the fabric softener dispenser (or in a Downy ball). The vinegar will then be released during the final rinse and will adjust the pH of your load – it also softens them. Never use fabric softener, as it makes your diapers repel water.

As for what to do with your child/children during your time to the laundromat, we hope you can leave them with Daddy and see your visit to the laundromat as a quiet break with a good book!

Dirty Diapers: To Dunk or Not to Dunk?

Many parents cringe at the thought of having to rinse poopie diapers out before washing. Some even choose disposables for this one reason. So do you really have to dunk and rinse dirty diapers? Our basic answer to this question is: No, in most cases, you do not need to dunk any of your diapers. There are a couple of exceptions to this, so keep reading. . .

(These instructions refer to the steps immediately following a diaper change)

1. For a wet diaper, just take the diaper out of the wrap and drop it into your pail. Unless your child has particularly stinky pee, there is no need to rinse wet diapers. And your diaper covers can be used several times between washes. Just hang the cover to “air out” – either over a shower curtain, towel rod, or on the back of your changing table. With pocket diapers, separate insert from “pocket” and place both in your pail – pocket diapers are to be washed after each use. If you think it's time to pail a diaper cover, be sure it's Velcro tabs are fastened (snap closures do not need to be fastened for washing).
2. With a poopy diaper, gather your fragrant bundle by the outside of the diaper cover and take it to the bathroom. Drop the dirty washies into your pail, along with the wrap – be sure any Velcro tabs are fastened first. Hold diaper over the toilet and shake what poop you can into the water and flush it. Unless you wash your diapers at a laundromat and want to follow our dry diaper method, we declare to you that **YOU DO NOT NEED TO DUNK AND SWIRL YOUR DIRTY DIAPERS!** We won't stop you from doing it, and if you'll sleep better at night knowing you did your best to get all the poops out, go for it. But, your washing machine can do the dirty work for you! Amazing! So just drop your poopy diaper into your pail and shut the lid.

****Bacteria from illnesses can be present in a child's stool, as can remnants of medicines and vaccines. To cut down on the spread of these unwanted substances, we do recommend that you**

rinse these diapers well. And if you don't use gloves for this, please wash your hands thoroughly (which we hope you do anyway after a diaper change!). Another way to disinfect your diapers is with Grapefruit seed extract (GSE).

***You may also want to rinse your poopy diapers if undigested food particles are found in the diaper. In our house, raisins often make their way through young digestive tracts relatively unscathed. These will show up in your clean diapers unless you rinse them out first.