

Diaper Dictionary

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From closures to PUL: A guide to making the right choice for your family

Navigating Cloth Diapers

There are two basic parts to a cloth diaper: absorbent material and water-proof material. These elements are combined in a variety of ways by manufacturers to produce seemingly endless options to suit every lifestyle, budget and body.

In addition to the diapers themselves, modern cloth diapering offers a variety of accessories that can simplify the process.

RECOMMENDED CLOTH DIAPERING ACCESSORIES

- 2 bags for dirty diapers- one to collect diapers and one to be in the wash
- 1 zippered diaper tote for messes out on the town
- 1 diaper sprayer- yes, you can swish if you want, but this will make life easier
- 12-24 Cloth wipes- Can use with water or wipes solutions
- Cloth changing pad
- Additive free detergent

Washing the diapers

Wash diapers once with a cold prewash and once with hot wash and extra rinse. Be sure to use a completely fragrance, softener and brightener free detergent. Throw your wet bag into the machine along with your diapers.

Drying the diapers

Place your inserts into the dryer and hang your shells to preserve their life. The shells will dry about as fast as the inserts.

Detergent

With the exception of Rumparooz, all diaper manufacturers recommend additive free detergent. This is because additives like optical brighteners, fragrance and fabric softeners will make diapers repel water. Who wants that! Rumparooz recommends Tide and some diaper users have had great success with it.

ASSEMBLAGES

All in one

A diaper that is one solid unit. It can fasten with Velcro, snaps, or hooks, but it is usually touted as the easiest diaper to put on.

Brands: Drybees Hybrid, Lil' Joey

Pros: Easy to use

Cons: More expensive, more laundry

All in twos

A diaper with two parts, a shell and an insert. Shells can be used multiple times between washings and inserts are used once for each change. Pocket diapers (see below) are a subset of all in twos and change the laundry paradigm so that each diaper is worn only once between washings.

Brands: Fuzzibunz, Sprout Change, Rumparooz, Whamies, Rocky Mountain Diapers, Drybees hybrid, Softbums, Charlie Banana, Thirsties

Pros: Can customize shell and insert choices, creates less laundry (unless using a pocket)

Cons: Must stuff and pull diapers apart when laundering

FITS

One size

Diapers with an adjustable feature that allow you to customize the fit from a newborn size (around 6-8lbs) to toddler size (35-45lbs). Comes in many all-in-two styles and brands and can refer to either inserts or shells. Most common in pocket style diapers and shells. Most people find that pocket one size diapers don't fit babies well until they are over 10lbs.

Brands: Fuzzibunz, Sprout change, Rumparooz, Softbums, Charlie Banana

Pros: save mucho dinero by buying one set of diapers instead of 3-4 sets of diapers as your baby grows.

Cons: Sometimes (depending on the brand) the diaper does not last as many years (up to 3) as your child is in diapers. Initial cost can be higher. "Bulkier" fit on small babies.

Fitted

Diapers that are cut to fit a specific sized baby. Fitted diapers come in an array of closures (snaps, hook and loop, Snappies, hook and eye), and in a variety of assemblages (pocket, all in one, all in two, shells, inserts).

Pros: great fit

Cons: greater cost as you have to purchase a new set every time your baby grows

Brands: Fuzzibunz Perfect Fit, Rumparooz Lil Joey, Charlie Banana, Thirsties Diaper covers.

Laundry

Changing a wet diaper

When changing a diaper that is only wet, simply remove the wet diaper and place into a zippered wet bag or a wet-bag lined diaper pail.

If you are using pockets you will need to remove the absorbent insert from the shell.

If using a shell and insert system, remove both the shell and insert, place the insert into the wet bag and hang the shell to air dry until the next change.

Changing a soiled diaper

Methods vary greatly here. Solid matter must be removed from the diaper before laundering. This can be accomplished by spraying the diaper clean with a diaper sprayer, or dunking the diaper in the toilet. The diaper doesn't need to be completely clean, but solids should be removed.

Regardless of the diaper system you are using, all diaper components should be placed in the wet bag.

Prepping a Cotton Prefold, Bamboo or Hemp Diaper

There are 2 popular ways to prepare your prefolds for use.

The first is to wash them 4 or 5 times. You will notice that with each washing, they become fluffier and shorter.

The second method is quicker. Boil your prefolds for 15 minutes in a large pot of water, then wash and dry. You will get the same fluffy results in less time.

Cotton, bamboo and hemp diapers will shrink in size when they are prepped.

COMPONENTS

Closures: what keeps your diaper shut and snugly on your baby. The most popular two are snaps and hook and loop.

Dipes: Slang shorthand for "diapers" in the diapering world.

Fitteds: Can refer to the fit of a diaper, but also to diaper inserts that fit like a diaper

Insert: The absorbent part of a diaper. Can be made from cotton, hemp, bamboo, or polyester. These come in many shapes, such as long strips, peanuts, prefold squares and diaper cuts.

Micro Terry: An absorbent fabric often used in pocket diaper inserts. Because it is so good at attracting moisture, it should not be placed in contact with baby's skin.

Pockets: often grouped with all in two diapers, pockets are built into many diapers to keep the insert (absorbent material) of the diaper in place. They are usually constructed from a polyester fleece lining that wicks moisture away from the baby and a PUL exterior that is water, but not air, proof.

Prefold: These are the diapers of old. They are large hemp, cotton or bamboo squares that can be pinned, snapped or folded around your baby.

PUL: Stands for Polyurathane Laminate. A fancy way of saying a thin poly coating is applied to fabric to keep moisture from escaping.

Shell: The outside waterproof part of a diaper. A shell can refer to the exterior of an all in one diaper, or a stand-alone part that can be combined with any insert.

Snappies: Clips that take the place of pins. No poking the baby!

'Sposies: Slang in the cloth diapering community for "disposable" diapers.

Stash: More cloth diaper lover slang meaning your adorable collection of cloth diapers.

VOCs: Volatile organic chemicals. Ethylbenzene, toluene, xylene, dipentene etc. found in disposable diapers.

Wet Bag- A bag made of or lined with PUL that is used to store soiled diapers until washing. The wet bag is put into the washer with soiled diapers.

Wicking- An important part of a dry feeling diaper. Fabrics such as fleece (polyester or cotton) "wick" (pull moisture away from) babies skin and transfer it to more absorbent material (hemp, microterry, etc.).

NAVIGATING PREFOLDS

The first time I saw a prefold, I thought to myself, "There is nothing folded about this square of fabric!" But, what I didn't realize, was that during a much earlier time, diapers were one evenly flat piece of fabric that had to be hand-folded over and over again before being origamied and pinned onto a baby. The modern prefold, on the other hand, has already been folded and sewn down in layers to create an easier to use diaper. Prefolds come in 4 basic sizes (this does vary some from manufacturer to manufacturer), preemie, infant, regular and toddler. Oso Cozy has developed a new style called "The Better Fit" which is designed to fit more comfortably into a cover. Prefolds also have a set of numbers - 4x6x4, 4x8x4 - indicating how many layers of fabric are folded and sewn down. A 4x6x4 diaper means that the edges have 4 layers of fabric, while the middle swath has 6 layers of fabric. Often a 4x6x4 diaper is considered to be the standard, and a 4x8x4 is considered to be a premium diaper because it has added absorbency.

The most popular styles today come bleached or unbleached from China and India. Indian cotton is a little softer and pills less than the Chinese cotton.

Organic cotton and hemp diapers are on the rise and are a great option for those with the financial means because they provide the same benefits to your child and save gallons of chemicals from being used during the growing process. In addition to cotton, prefolds come in hemp and bamboo.