
**THE COMPLETE
CLOTH
DIAPERING
HANDBOOK**

**EVERYTHING YOU
NEED TO KNOW
TO CLOTH DIAPER
CONFIDENTLY**

THE COMPLETE CLOTH DIAPERING HANDBOOK:

Everything You Need to Know to Cloth Diaper Confidently

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1. INTRODUCTION

The choice to cloth diaper can be an overwhelming one.

Maybe it's something you've heard of but aren't sure how it actually works. Or you've seen a cute photo of a cloth diaper but think *'I just don't have the time for that.'*

The first thing to realize is that cloth diapering has come a LONG way in recent years. The cloth diapers that our moms are familiar with (basically clothespins and an envelope of fabric) have been replaced by modern cloth diapers. These are easy to use, budget-friendly and cute!

Cloth diapering is practiced differently from household to household. And this book will give you the tools you need to see how cloth diapering can work for YOU. If you're unsure about cloth diapering or exploding with questions (like I was at first!) - keep reading.

My goal is to not only get you the information you need but to get you EXCITED to cloth diaper.

This book will:

- Give you an idea of what it's really like to cloth diaper daily
- Answer any questions you have about cloth diapering
- Help you choose the right cloth diapers for your baby
- Show you how to save money with cloth diapers
- Help you avoid common cloth diaper mistakes (I've made plenty of these!)
- Get you excited to cloth diaper & join the fluffy butt baby club :)

And much more. There are 40 pages of info, resources, and stories so that you can cloth diaper confidently.

A Quick Note:

This book focuses primarily on cloth diapering solutions besides pre-folds: All in Ones, Pocket Diapers, and Hybrids. This is because these types of diapers are most popular at the moment and what I have experience with. If you don't know what those types of diapers are, keep reading!

I've also linked to products throughout this book, all of which are on Amazon. This is because Amazon is a popular place to buy these products, it's where we personally buy a lot of our cloth diapering products, and it gives you an idea of what kind of products are on the market. I'm also part of the Amazon Affiliates Program, which means that - at no cost to you - if you click these links and make a purchase, I make a commission.

2. TRUE OR FALSE? 5 COMMON CLOTH DIAPERING ASSUMPTIONS

1. Cloth diapers are hard to use.

FALSE.

Cloth diapers are incredibly easy to use. The amount of time it takes to snap one on your baby is just as quick as a disposable. Gone are the days of our parents and grandparents when cloth diapering meant pinning, folding, and lots of work.

2. Cloth diapering takes more time out of the day than regular diapering.

TRUE.

Cloth diapering takes a few more minutes each day than regular diapering. This is the result of a few steps - here's the breakdown of where this time comes from:

- 1.) After you change your baby's diaper you have to do something with the diaper. There may be a three step process of taking it off, rinsing it off, and stuffing it in your diaper pail.
- 2.) Cloth diapers have to be washed in the laundry, which takes time.
- 3.) Some types of cloth diapers need to be prepped before they are used: they need to be stuffed or snapped.

If this sounds like a lot, it's not. The extra time is manageable - in my day it's maybe 15 minutes working efficiently.

The time that cloth diapering takes is one of the main concerns that I hear from new moms. *'I'll have a newborn - I don't want to add anything else to my plate!'* is a common thought. But you'll be changing diapers anyway, and cloth diapering takes just a few extra minutes, spread out over the course of the day. Once it's part of your routine it will feel normal - just as normal as all the other newborn activities you'll be doing. And the benefits of cloth diapering outweigh any extra time it takes.

3. Cloth diapering can save money.

TRUE.

This is a reason that many families cloth diaper. Cloth diapering can save you money, since you're investing in a set of diapers that you'll use until your baby is potty trained.

Diapers are one of the biggest baby costs once your little one is home. Cloth diapers alleviate a monthly payment to the disposable diaper retailers.

The cost of using disposable diapers can be well over \$1,500, while a cloth diaper stash can be purchased for under \$500. The savings are huge, and will be even more if you get your cloth diapers second hand or sell them once you're done.

One cost that cloth diapering incurs that disposables do not is your water or electric bill to wash them. The laundry to wash the cloth diapers may be an added cost to consider. The costs savings from cloth diapering usually outweigh this, but it's something to think about.

4. Cloth diapering takes more laundry.

TRUE.

Cloth diapering does add some more laundry to your week. How much laundry depends on how often you wash your diapers and how many you have.

If you have lots of cloth diapers or less frequent diaper changes, you may be able to stretch out how often you wash your diapers to a couple days. Generally, you don't want to let the diapers sit longer than 2 - 3 days. You'll at least be washing diapers this often.

This means that you'll be adding extra laundry into your routine.

But honestly, I find that with a baby in the mix we do a lot more laundry now anyways. So the added loads for cloth diapers aren't overwhelming.

5. It's messy. Don't you have to do something with the poop?!

TRUE.

Cloth diapering has messy moments. But so do disposables...no matter the diapers you are using there WILL be mess involved!

The main concern that comes up with cloth diapering is the poop. Once your baby is eating solid foods, you'll need to rinse out the poop from the diaper before throwing it into your diaper bag.

Fortunately, there is a helpful invention for this: a sprayer that attaches easily to your toilet (like [this one](#)). With this, you give the poop a quick rinse into the toilet and are done with it. Of course the sprayer accessory isn't necessary, but it's a simple way to deal with baby's business.

And if your baby is exclusively breastfed, dealing with the poop is even easier: no need to rinse the diaper - simply toss it in the diaper bag. For breastfed babies, their poop is water-soluble, and can be washed clean in the laundry.

Now that you know the truth...

Addressing these assumptions up-front is key: they stop a lot of families from even looking into cloth diapering. Now that you know the truth about them, we can go in depth on these topics.

I'll bet you have even more questions after reading this, so fear not! We'll explore these topics and more in the coming pages. By the end of this book you'll have a complete picture of how cloth diapering can work for you.

3. THE BENEFITS OF CLOTH DIAPERING

If you're on the fence about cloth diapering, then these benefits are what will sell you on it. These are the reasons why people cloth diaper, why they find ways to make it work for them.

I was hesitant about cloth diapering at first, but the more I researched it the more I discovered the benefits. And when faced with all the positives of cloth diapering, I was sold.

Cloth diapering has its pros and cons, and these are some big pros...

The Top 8 Benefits of Cloth Diapering

1. Less chemicals.

Cloth diapers have less chemicals than disposable diapers. Disposable diapers use chemicals to bleach them white, make them super absorbent, and mask odors. Many of these chemicals have been termed toxic by the EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).

Here's a few of the chemicals in disposable diapers & what they do:

- **Dioxins:** a majority of disposable diapers are bleached white using chlorine, which results in a byproduct called dioxins. According to the EPA, dioxins are one of the most toxic chemicals known to science. They are listed as highly carcinogenic and exposure to them may cause issues with some of our major organs, in addition to skin reactions.

- **Sodium Polyacrylate:** this is a chemical used in the filler of diapers to make them super absorbent. It's thought to be linked to skin reactions as well as respiratory problems. This chemical is relatively new, only used in diapers for the last two decades, so the significance of it's long-term effects is not yet clear.
- **Tributyl-tin (TBT):** many disposable diapers contain TBT, a chemical found to be highly toxic. TBT does not degrade, remaining in the environment and food chain. It's been found to be harmful to aquatic life and used in biocides, which kill infecting organisms.
- **Other chemicals:** this list is just a few of the chemicals in diapers. There's others such as dyes and fragrances.

2. Less waste.

Disposable diapers stick around in our landfills for a long time. It's estimated that they take 500 years to decompose. Combine this with the fact that a baby can use 2,000 pounds - a literal ton - of diapers in their lifetime, and you get an idea of the waste. Cloth diapering keeps this added waste out of landfills, which is better for the environment and our babies' generation.

3. More cost savings.

The cost of disposable diapers adds up over time (averages over \$1,500 per child), whereas a set of cloth diapers can be reused for years and bought for as little as \$500.

Below is a cost comparison to give you an idea of the savings. This is based on data taken from Amazon.com on September 19, 2018.

Individual Cost of Disposable Diapers			
	Premium Brand	Brand Name	Budget Brand
Newborn	\$0.28	\$0.23	\$0.15
Toddler	\$0.35	\$0.32	\$0.17

Monthly Cost of Disposable Diapers*			
	Premium Brand	Brand Name	Budget Brand
Newborn	\$100.80	\$82.80	\$54.00
Toddler	\$63.00	\$57.60	\$30.60

*Assuming newborns go through 12 diapers per day and toddlers 6 diapers per day.

Lifetime Cost of Disposable Diapers: Two Years Worth of Diapers*			
	Premium Brand	Brand Name	Budget Brand
TOTAL	\$1,738.80	\$1,533.60	\$874.00

*Assuming newborns go through 12 diapers per day for 6 months and toddlers 6 diapers per day for 18 months.

This data is also based on buying the disposable diapers in bulk, in some of the highest quantities available on Amazon. If you purchase your disposables from your local grocery store or retailer they will likely be more expensive than the prices above.

Overall, these numbers are meant to give a conservative estimate for disposable diapers.

Now for the cloth diaper cost...

Cloth diapers, on the other hand, come out to be much less expensive. They are more expensive per diaper (around \$20.00), but last through potty training.

The Cost of Cloth Diapers	
Average Cost per Cloth Diaper	\$20.00
TOTAL Lifetime Cost of Cloth Diapering (if you purchase 24 diapers total)	\$480.00

The cloth diapering numbers are based on an average cloth diaper cost - you'll find that some cloth diapers are more or less expensive. It's also based on 24 diapers, which is how many I recommend you have in your stash.

For further cost savings, buy cloth diapers second hand. Because they retain their quality for so long, cloth diapers can be purchased used. You can also sell your cloth diapers when you're done to make a little extra money.

If budgeting for baby has you feeling stressed, cloth diapers are a way to cut costs. As you can tell, the cost of disposable diapers adds up. Over the course of a couple years it becomes a significant amount. This is money that you could be spending on other baby items, using to pay your bills, putting in savings, etc.

Personal Story

How We Got Our Cloth Diapers

For our cloth diaper stash, we got almost all of our cloth diapers secondhand from a friend and supplemented with a few new ones. I found my friend's cloth diapers through a post on Facebook; and Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace are good places to look. Depending on where you live, there may also be swaps between moms. I've heard of regional Facebook groups for swaps where moms meet up and swap all the baby things that their little ones outgrew.

4. Less leaks & blowouts.

Because most cloth diapers have well-fitted elastic around the legs and waist there are fewer leaks and messy blowouts are rare. The elastic of cloth diapers does its job: it keeps the mess contained.

5. Less rashes.

Rashes are less common with cloth diapers. Disposable diapers have a number of chemicals that can irritate baby's bottom and lead to a rash. Cloth diapers don't have these chemicals, minimizing the risk of a rash.

6. Ease of potty training.

Disposable diapers contain chemicals that make them super absorbent. Because cloth diapers don't have these, it's easier for babies to realize when their diapers are wet or dirty. Parents say this allows them to potty train earlier and easier.

7. Cute patterns.

There are patterns galore for cloth diapers! And they are so cute it's hard not to want to buy them all... Their cuteness makes them fun to collect, use, and outfit your baby. Sometimes in the hot months we dress our little one just in a shirt and cloth diaper. He's dressed right for the weather and looks cute.

8. They grow with your baby.

Many cloth diapers come in adjustable sizes. You can purchase them once and use them for years as your baby grows. The same set of cloth diapers will last from newborn to potty training. This contributes to cost savings and is also very convenient!

4. HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT CLOTH DIAPER FOR YOU

There's several different 'styles' of cloth diapers. They all vary slightly in function and price. In the end, the best type of cloth diaper is the one that fits your lifestyle and price point.

Here's the most popular options and the differences between them:

Prefolds

\$\$\$\$

These are your most basic cloth diapers. They are essentially a square of fabric that you fold. You'll want to pair these with a waterproof cover and some pins or snaps (like these: [Snappi Cloth Diaper Fasteners](#)). Learning to fold/fit these on your baby may take a bit of practice, but this is the most cost effective cloth diapering option.

Fitted

\$\$\$

These are similar to prefolds in that they are cotton and need a waterproof cover. The difference is that they come pre-fitted to a diaper shape with elastic in the leg and waist area.

All in One (AIO)

\$\$\$\$

All in Ones are a combination of cloth interior plus waterproof cover. They are 'all in one' because you do not need to purchase a separate cover. All in Ones are popular because of their ease of use. However, they are slightly more expensive than the alternatives. **These are the most similar in function to a disposable diaper.**

Pocket

\$\$\$\$

These have a waterproof cover with space inside (a 'pocket') to insert an absorbent cloth liner. These are similar to the All in One diapers, except that they require the extra step of stuffing the liner in the pocket for each diaper. They are slightly less expensive than the All in One diapers.

These are the style we use! They are super easy to use, dry quickly, and there are plenty of options for patterns/styles.

Hybrid

\$\$ \$\$

Hybrid diapers consist of a waterproof cover with the option to add a disposable liner, fabric liner, or prefold diaper inside. Once the liner interior is soiled, it is tossed or cleaned.

Note:

If you aren't sure which style of cloth diaper will work best, it doesn't hurt to try a few! Before investing in a whole set of one type, try out a few to see what you like.

Cloth Diapering Hack: Explore Your Cloth Diaper Options

A common mistake is to buy an entire stash of one kind of diaper, only to realize that you actually prefer another type. Because there are many types of cloth diapers on the market, explore them before you buy. Get your hands on them if you can, or start with a few different types to figure out what you like.

Personal Story: Picking out Cloth Diapers

We decided on our cloth diapers in a couple ways... The first was by talking to a friend who uses them. She let me come over, ask questions, and check out her son's diapers. Seeing how cloth diapers worked in person was huge! It made me feel like it was something I could do. My husband and I were also lucky enough to go to a Cloth Diapering 101 Class offered by our Birth Center. They had samples of all kinds of diapers to pass around and inspect. Depending on where you live, there may be similar classes in your area.

Cloth Diaper Add Ons

In your cloth diapering research you may come across the following terms. As mentioned in some of the styles above, these can be good to purchase in addition to your diapers:

Liners

Example: [Reusable Liners](#)

These are placed between the baby's bottom and the diaper and are used to catch waste. They're not required for most cloth diaper types. Liners are purchased separately to make clean-up easier. Simply remove or wash the liner rather than removing & washing the whole diaper. They come in fabric or biodegradable paper.

If you're worried about cleaning up baby's number twos with cloth diapers, these would be a good investment.

Diaper Covers

Example: [Rumparooz One Size Snap Cover](#)

These are the waterproof covers that are needed for some diaper types, such as prefolds.

Doublers

Example: [Thirstie's Hemp Inserts](#)

These are cloth pads that are added to the diaper for extra absorbency, if needed at nighttime or for heavy wetters.

5. BRANDS OF CLOTH DIAPERS

There are endless brands of cloth diapers on the market - every configuration, style and pattern you can imagine.

Below is a quick overview of some of the top diaper brands that you'll come across. I'll hesitate from getting into the pros and cons of each, because how much you like a particular diaper or brand is mostly personal preference. To choose a brand, first narrow down the type of diaper you'd like to use (Prefold, All-In One, Pocket, etc.) and then check out the brands that sell them.

bumGenius:

www.bumGenius.com

One of the most popular cloth diaper brands. This is what we use. They have different styles of diapers, notably a great Pocket diaper and an All in One. If you're just getting started, bumGenius is a one-stop shop for all your cloth diapering needs. They sell diapers, accessories, etc - the works!

GroVia:

www.GroVia.com

Another popular brand. We have a few of these as well and love them. Their Hybrid diaper is of my favorites: it comes with an insert that easily snaps on and off for washing.

Thirsties:

www.ThirstiesBaby.com

These are one of the few cloth diaper brands available in big-box retailers like Target and Walmart.

Cloth-eez:

www.greenmountaindiapers.com/collections/cloth-eez-brand

Prefold diapers made of natural cotton.

Personal Story: The Brand We Recommend

A common question I get is what brand of cloth diapers I recommend. We use bumGenius, and have had a great experience with all of their diapering products. Because I like the whole bumGenius cloth diapering system, and because I have experience with it, that's my top choice! We got the [bumGenius Pocket diapers](#), wet bag, travel bag, cloth wipes, cloth wipe spray, - and I'm sure will be making more purchases from their shop in the future :)

9. ACCESSORIES

Now that we've covered the ins and outs of the diapers themselves, what about the other stuff that's needed for cloth diapering?

Cloth diapering has a few accessories that you'll want to check out:

- **Diaper pail + liner:** a basic pail is all that's needed for dirty cloth diapers (it could even be a trash can). A reusable liner is recommended – that way you can throw it along with the diapers inside of it straight into the wash.
- **Wet bag:** this can take the place of a diaper pail if you prefer. It's a reusable/washable bag for holding dirty diapers.
- **Travel bag:** a smaller variation of the wet bag that you can grab and take on the go.
- **Cloth wipes:** reusable/cloth wipes go hand in hand with cloth diapering. Simply throw them in the diaper pail or bag and wash them with your diapers.
- **Sprayer:** handy sprayers are available that [attach directly to your toilet](#). These are for spraying off any solid waste before throwing a diaper into the pail.
- **Diaper ointment:** with cloth diapers, avoid any diaper ointment that includes petroleum, zinc, or fish oils as they will break down the absorbency of your diapers. Instead, use natural alternatives like coconut oil if needed.
- **Bottom spray:** you may want a spray to use as you wipe. It should be one that is natural, not including any chemicals that will block diaper absorbency.

Popular Question: Are All of These Accessories Necessary?

The only accessories you really need to make cloth diapering work are a pail or bag and some wipes! The other items are nice to have, but not required.

Popular Question: Can You Travel with Cloth Diapers?

Yes! Traveling with cloth diapers is easy. In addition to purchasing a 'wet bag' for your soiled diapers, purchase a smaller travel-sized wet bag. Take this with you wherever you go and you'll have a convenient way to store your diapers.

7. HOW TO GET STARTED

Once you're ready to bring some cloth diapers home, the next step is deciding how many and where to buy. Here are some simple starting points:

How Many Cloth Diapers to Buy:

24 diapers is about the minimum that you'll want to purchase. This is keeping in mind that you would probably do laundry around every other day. On average, newborns go through 12 - 16 diapers a day and older babies go through 6 - 9 diapers a day.

Personal Story: More Diapers = Less Laundry

Babies go through a lot of diaper changes when they're little. This tapers off over time, but at first it's constant! We started off with 24 diapers and were doing laundry to wash them every day: we'd go through about 10 - 12 diapers a day, and always have about half going through the washing process and half ready to use. If you buy more diapers, you'll be able to do laundry a little less often.

Where to Buy Cloth Diapers:

- **Amazon:** tons of options here, just double check that the prices are the same as on the brand's website. Sometimes prices are slightly higher on Amazon.
- **Brand websites:** go directly to a brand or manufacturer's website (like bumGenius.com or CottonBabies.com). This is great for browsing all styles available and seeing everything a brand has to offer.
- **In store:** big box retailers (like Target & Walmart) both carry some cloth diapers. Local specialty stores (like ones that carry eco-friendly baby products) may have more options if there's one in your area.

Cloth Diapering Hack: Buying Diapers Second Hand

Since cloth diapers keep their quality over time, buying second hand is a good option too! Getting a discount on second hand diapers is also a good place to start if you aren't sure about cloth diapering or want to try different styles.

Popular Question: I Just Bought a Bunch of Cloth Diapers. Do I Need to Wash Them Before Using?

Yes, go ahead and wash them. For polyester diapers, do a regular wash before using. For natural fiber diapers: wash 3 – 5 times in hot water and dry between each wash. This allows the diapers to get to their proper absorbency level.

8. WHEN TO START

There are cloth diapers that come in newborn size, so you can start cloth diapering as early as you like. Some hospitals will even let you cloth diaper as soon as your baby is out of the womb.

Most standard cloth diapers are designed for babies starting at around 7 - 10 lbs. This means that if you want to cloth diaper from birth, you'll likely need to invest in a set of newborn size cloth diapers. For most babies, standard size diapers are a little big at first. You'll also want to be conscious of keeping the baby's umbilical cord area dry. Most newborn diapers are designed specifically to go under this area.

The downside to cloth diapering with newborn size diapers is that you'll have to invest in newborn size diapers AND standard size. Newborns go through a lot of diapers, so you'll want to have a sizeable stash. Note that standard size diapers will last your baby from 7 - 10 lbs through potty training.

Personal Story:

Starting with Disposables, Switching to Cloth

An alternative to cloth diapering from birth is to use disposable diapers at first, until your baby is big enough to fit into his cloth diapers. We did this with our little one and he was in disposables until he hit 8 lbs, which was around 7 weeks old for him. Some moms also favor starting with disposables when their baby is tiny because it gives them a chance to ease into cloth diapering.

9. HOW TO WASH

Getting cloth diapers clean is easier than most people think. **There's only 4 steps to washing them - nothing crazy, no magic formula, just your basic laundry...**

Here's simple step-by-step instructions:

4 Steps to Get Your Cloth Diapers Clean

- 1. Get ready for washing:** after every time you change a diaper, put it into your diaper bag or pail. Diapers that are wet as well as exclusively breastfed diapers can go straight into the diaper pail. For formula and solid food diapers, shake or wash off any waste first.
- 2. Prewash cold:** no detergent. This gets rid of waste & stains.
- 3. Wash hot:** add detergent. This cleans the diapers. If you notice that your diapers are still smelly when done with the wash, you may not be using enough detergent or enough water.
- 4. Dry:** hang to dry or tumble dry on warm/medium. Hanging the diapers to dry is preferred as it preserves them longer. Hanging diapers to dry in the sun will naturally sanitize and bleach out stains.

Popular Question: Will the Diapers Get Very Smelly?

If you are washing your diapers regularly (every 2 – 3 days or so), then they shouldn't build up a bad stink - no more so than disposable diapers. If you run into very smelly problems, it's because you should add more detergent or water in the wash. Or try adding ¼ cup of bleach to the wash once a month to combat this.

Popular Question: Will Cloth Diapers Make My Laundry Machine Dirty?

Nope! The waste is already washed off by the time they go in, and they won't get it any dirtier than regular laundry.

What Detergent to Use

Many detergents contain chemicals that will reduce the absorbency of cloth diapers. Check with any manufacturer before using a detergent. Generally 'free & clear' detergents are best for cloth diapers. Also stay away from fabric softeners and baby detergents. These have chemicals in them that hurt the absorbency of cloth diapers.

Some preferred cloth diaper detergents are:

1. [Tide](#) – this is what we use! (Just regular Tide in powder form, not Tide Free)
2. [Rockin' Green Diaper Detergent](#)
3. [Bio-Kleen Free & Clear](#)
4. [Mountain Green Free & Clear](#)
5. [Allen's Naturally Powder/Liquid](#)

Cloth Diapering Hack: Washing in Hard Water

If you have hard water, mainstream detergents (like Tide) may be your best option. These detergents in powder form already to contain substances to counteract hard water.

How Often to Wash

To prevent diapers getting too smelly, wash them every 2 – 3 days. You can wash them more frequently than this if needed. If you have a smaller stash of diapers you'll probably find yourself washing them a little more frequently to avoid running out.

Cloth Diapering Hack: Whiten Your Diapers in The Sun

The sun is a great natural whitener! If you spot some stains on your diapers, hang them out in the sun to dry and bleach them white.

Diaper Cleaning Services

Though not available everywhere, diaper cleaning services are worth mentioning. These are local services that will pick up your dirty cloth diapers and wash them every few days. Some will also supply you with fresh cloth diapers when they pick up the dirty ones. This takes away some of the cost effectiveness of cloth diapering, but is a convenient alternative to washing them yourself.

10. GOING BACK TO WORK + DAYCARE

Going back to work can raise more questions about cloth diapers. ‘Will I still have time to cloth diaper?’ and ‘what if my daycare doesn’t accept cloth diapers?’ are a couple common ones.

Cloth Diapering + Childcare

Depending where you live, your local daycare or caregivers may be open to using cloth diapers. This is something to ask about up front - and you’re probably not the first one to ask about it. Feel free to go in depth on this topic (along with any others!), when looking for a childcare provider.

Though more and more daycares are willing to cloth diaper, not all are. Some moms get around this by doing disposables for daycare and cloth diapering otherwise.

Cloth Diapering + Going Back to Work

By the time your baby goes to daycare, you’ll already have fallen into your cloth diapering routine. Though it will still take some time each day, cloth diapering and returning to work is not as tricky as some moms think.

At this point, you’ve already been cloth diapering for a little while. And the more you do it, the easier it gets.

II. TROUBLESHOOTING COMMON PROBLEMS

In this section we'll cover some of the common problem that can happen with cloth diapers. **Most of these problems aren't unique to cloth diapers (they happen with disposables too), but this is how to approach, troubleshoot, and resolve them with cloth.**

1. Rashes

Rashes are less common with cloth diapers than disposable diapers because of the lack of chemicals. However, your baby can still get rashes. Some potential causes of this could be: the wipes that you use or your baby sitting too long in a dirty diaper (like when they first start sleeping through the night).

To troubleshoot, first get to the root of the problem. For example, if you suspect your wipes are the culprit, switch brands (or try reusable, [cloth wipes](#)).

Once you've identified the source of the rash, treating a rash in cloth diapers is a little different than disposables. Many of your typical diaper rash creams contain substances that can't be used with cloth diapers, like Zinc. This is because their contact with the cloth diaper lessens the cloth's absorbency.

Just like you have to be careful with what detergent you use with cloth, you also have to be careful with diaper creams. A safe, simple alternative to diaper cream is coconut oil, which is antifungal and will soothe baby's booty.

There's other natural solutions that you can find from a quick Google search: from DIY concoctions to natural ingredients to put on baby's bottom. We've only ever used coconut oil, so that's my go-to recommendation.

Some other ways to treat a rash in cloth diapers include:

- Soaking your baby in a warm bath.
- Using washcloths and warm water to clean baby's bottom.
- Switching to wipes that are very gentle (we use [Pamper's Pure](#) when we use disposable wipes) or try [cloth wipes](#).
- Coconut oil. Remember to stay away from traditional diaper rash creams that use Zinc.
- Let baby air-dry/go naked! This one is risky because you'll have a naked baby on your hands...but if you can, let baby go diaper-free for a short stretch of time to give the rash relief. You can wrap baby in a loose towel for protection from any resulting messes :)

2. Leaks

You're nursing your baby, cuddled peacefully up on your lap, when suddenly your stomach gets warm. It's not a surge of warm, cuddly emotion - it's that your baby just peed and leaked on you! We had some particular trouble with this issue, so I'll lay out a few things to try if your cloth diapers leak.

Note that this is usually parent/user error, rather than a failure on the part of the cloth diaper...

How to Troubleshoot Leaks:

Is the diaper on your baby correctly?

Every cloth diaper has different instructions for use. If you're noticing consistent leaking, double check with the brand's instructions that you're putting it on 100% correctly.

Is any stuffing/pocket insert/liner/etc. installed fully?

If your diapers come with some kind of insert or liner, make sure that it's fully covering the area that it's meant to. We use pocket diapers and had a couple of leaks early on because we stuffed them in a hurry and the interior was crumpled up; instead of spread out and ready to absorb.

Does the diaper fit your baby?

Babies grow fast. This means that you might be adjusting your cloth diapers to fit your baby more often than you think. If you buy a one-size cloth diaper (designed for any age), then you'll have some options on the diaper (usually snaps) to adjust the size. If you notice leaks in strange places, it may be time to loosen the diaper to fit your growing baby. But be careful not to over loosen - a loose diaper can be a leaky diaper too.

If you're not sure how tight the diaper should be: check the brand's instructions, and check it on your baby. It shouldn't be too tight but also shouldn't be too loose to where it's about to fall off or gaping in areas.

3. Nighttime

When babies start sleeping for longer stretches at night you might run into a couple issues: a leaky diaper or a diaper rash. Because babies are sitting in their diapers for a longer duration, there's more time for the diaper to soak through or cause irritation.

In either case, the issue is usually solved by increasing the absorbency of your diapers. This means adding extra liners or extra padding. If your diaper didn't come with liners/stuffing, these can be bought separately. And if you're using a prefold, double up.

This may make the diaper bulky, but that's what you want for nighttime. The extra bulk and absorbency will help take any moisture away from the baby's bottom and allow them to sleep happily.

4. Heavy Wetters

If your baby is a heavy wetter you'll want to treat it similarly to how you would if your baby is having trouble at night: add absorbency. Add extra liners/stuffing/etc. to deal with the extra wetness.

Your baby may be a heavy wetter if you're noticing that his diapers aren't keeping up with his output...this may be causing leaks or diapers getting completely soaked through. Try some of the other troubleshooting techniques first: make sure the diaper is on your baby correctly and make sure it fits correctly. If you're still having issues with wetness, increase the absorbency.

5. Smelly Diapers

Some parents run into problems with their diapers still smelling bad after washing. We've never had an issue with this (I think because our washing process is pretty robust), but here's what you can do if this happens:

- Check your washing routine. Make sure you are following steps ([like these](#)) to get the diapers fully clean.
- You may not be adding enough detergent. Try adding more to see if that helps the problem.
- You may not be washing them in enough water. The diapers need a good amount of water in the wash to get fully rinsed clean.
- Add a pre-wash cycle. We do this with every load of diapers: pre-wash on cold before washing hot with detergent. Add a pre-wash cycle or two to make extra sure any residue on the diapers is long gone.
- Air dry: hang up your diapers to dry, allowing them to dry naturally and fully, taking away any moisture that could get stinky.
- Wash your diapers more often. If you let your dirty diapers sit more than 2 - 3 days they become harder to get clean.
- And if all else fails, adding ¼ cup of bleach to your wash should do the trick.

12. CLOTH WIPES

Though not technically part of cloth diapering - and not necessary - using reusable, cloth wipes can go hand in hand with cloth diapering.

Cloth wipes are worth mentioning since parents who use cloth wipes usually choose to do so for the same reasons as cloth diapering.

Cloth wipes are small squares of fabric made of flannel or terry, designed specifically to wipe baby's bottom. A popular option, available on Amazon, are the [Oso Cozy Flannel Baby Wipes](#).

The Benefits of Cloth Wipes

The use of cloth wipes has many of the same benefits of cloth diapering:

- **They help save money:** you can buy a batch of cloth wipes to use over and over again, instead of one-time disposables.
- **Less chemicals:** disposable wipes contain chemicals that you expose your baby to when you wipe their bottom - not the case with cloth wipes.
- **Less waste:** because you're reusing cloth wipes, you're not creating waste every time you change a diaper.
- **Less rashes:** disposable wipes contain chemicals that can be potentially irritating to baby's skin; cloth wipes don't contain these.

The Cost Savings of Cloth Wipes

Here's a breakdown of how much money you can save with cloth wipes. This is based on data taken from Amazon.com on September 19, 2018.

This is also based on purchasing 40 cloth wipes, which is more than most people will need. You can get away with only purchasing 20 - 24 wipes. However, I've noticed that the wipes may need to be replaced once in a while, or mysteriously get lost, etc. So the count of **40 cloth wipes** is to conservatively get an idea of cost savings:

The Cost of Disposable Wipes vs. Cloth Wipes			
	Cloth Wipes (at buying 40 wipes)	Premium Disposable Wipes	Budget Disposable Wipes
Cost per Wipe	\$0.73	\$0.04	\$0.02
Cost per Month (at 15 wipes per day)	\$29.20	\$18.00	\$9.00
Cost per Year	\$29.20	\$216.00	\$108.00

These prices are also taken from Amazon.com, where disposable wipes can be bought in bulk and for cheaper. If you purchase disposable wipes from a local retailer they will likely be more expensive.

Cloth Diapering Hack: Make Your Own Cloth Wipes

You can save even more money by sewing your own wipes: purchase the cloth (thin flannel or otherwise) and sew it into squares.

Cloth Wipe Solution

You'll want to couple your cloth wipes with a cloth wipe solution. This can be purchased (for example, the [bumGenius Bottom Cleaner](#)). Or you can make your own. A quick Google search will reveal lots of recommendations for making your own wipe solution as well. It may take some experimentation to see which solution you like, what your baby likes, and what's the most cost effective.

We find it works best to put the solution in a small spray bottle, like [this one](#).

Cloth Wipe Solution Example

Here's the solution we use - it's simple to make and you can easily find the ingredients:

- 1/2 tablespoon [Dr. Bronner's Pure Castille Soap - Baby Unscented](#)
- 1 tablespoon [almond oil](#)
- 1 drop [lavender oil](#)
- 1 drop [tea tree oil](#)
- 1.5 cups water

Mix this up in your spray bottle and you're good to go!

How to Use Cloth Wipes

Once you have your cloth wipe solution, simply spray a few times onto your cloth wipe and then wipe baby's bottom - simple as that.

After you use the wipe you can toss it into your diaper bag with your dirty cloth diapers. Voila! The cloth wipe laundry is combined with cloth diaper laundry for an efficient process.

Many of the questions that come up about cloth wipes are similar to cloth diapers - *'doesn't it take more time/work?'* or *'isn't it messy?!'* But it's really not that much more work or time or mess than disposables. Since washing the wipes gets done at the same time as your diapers, there's only a little more laundry involved. I find cloth wipes to be *more efficient* - they're larger than disposables and make wiping baby's bottom easier.

13. CONCLUSION

Now that you're equipped with the knowledge of all things cloth diapering, hopefully you have an idea of how it can work for you. **And keep in mind that there is no 'right' way to diaper your child: whether they are in cloth or disposables, All-in-Ones or Prefolds - the 'right' way to cloth diaper is the one that works for your family.**

Cloth diapering doesn't have to be a big, intimidating commitment: take the first steps to try it out, however it may look like for you: maybe this is calling a friend who cloth diapers to ask questions, ordering a cloth diaper online to see what it looks like, or window shopping for different brands at a local retailer.

I've noticed that once you take a first step to cloth diapering, the rest usually follow. This is because so many of the ideas and assumptions that hold people back from cloth diapering fall away. Once you get your hands on a diaper, talk to someone who has done it or begin to explore what cloth diapering looks like for you - it becomes easier and easier to see how it could work for your family.

Most people agree with the benefits of cloth diapering, so when they see that it can fit into their routine, it becomes a no-brainer.

Beyond the decision to cloth diaper is setting yourself up for long-term cloth diapering success. And this book has done that: you now have the tools to cloth diaper confidently. Keep this as a reference for when questions crop up or you need a cloth diapering refresher. Be encouraged that cloth diapering comes in many shapes in sizes, and feel free to adapt as you go along to make it work for you.

Last but not least...

Sometimes it helps just to have someone to talk to about cloth diapering. To ask them questions, swap stories, or pick their brain. This is something I'm passionate about, so I'd love to be that person for you! Shoot me an email at thecabindiary@gmail.com, and we can chat all things cloth diaper (or motherhood or cabin life!). There are no silly questions when it comes to cloth diapering, and if you're like me you have many...

I'd love to hear from you.

All the best in your cloth diapering adventures,

- Megan

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