

Using Wool with your Cloth Diapers

If you are looking for more ways to have a greener baby you may be interested in cloth diapering with wool!

We started cloth diapers with our first baby sixteen years ago. Like everyone else from the early days of cloth, we had the flats or prefolds and vinyl pull on covers. Suddenly, there was a surge in options shortly after she was born. We found diaper wraps, which we commonly refer to as velcro covers. Then with baby number two, I discovered wool diaper covers, all in ones, and fitted diapers! Fitted diapers work quite well with wool. They contain the "explosive" poop of breastfed babies to help keep the woolies clean longer.

All things considered, washing wool diaper covers isn't any harder than washing cloth diapers. We actually think that washing wool is better because unlike cloth diapers which need to be washed every two to three days, wool only needs washing every couple of weeks!

Wool Diaper Covers Have Incredible Benefits

1. Wool is a sustainable choice.
2. The lanolin, a natural oil, makes it waterproof.
3. It wicks moisture away from your baby.
4. Wool is naturally antibacterial, anti-fungal, and antimicrobial.
5. Because of the antibacterial qualities the wool does not need to be washed that much; a few hours drying time and it is ready to go.
6. Warm in winter and cool in summer because it breathes. That means less likelihood of diaper rash.
7. These diaper covers are durable. With care they will last through several children.
8. It holds up to 40% of its weight in liquid!



One of the biggest arguments against the wool covers that I have heard is the initial expense of them. This is true, they are often \$35.00 or more each. However, you only need three or four of them at most. Plus, when you are done with the wool diaper covers you can sell them on eBay for almost as much as you bought them for. They retain their value really well. You can also ask for them as baby shower gifts.

We carry recycled/upcycled woolies at www.fotwdiapers.etsy.com

You can also find them at the following websites: Green Mountain Diapers, Better for Babies, Tiny Birds Organics

Homemade Wool Diaper Covers

If you knit, crochet, or sew, you can also make them. It is much cheaper to make them than buy them and there are free patterns all over the Internet. Longies, by the way, are diaper covers that have long legs, great for cold winters.



Tips for Maintaining Wool Soakers

Wool diaper covers are easy to maintain but here are some tips to get you started:

1. Use lanolin about twice a month in the rinse water to keep them waterproof
2. Use a mild soap and hand wash
3. If you are making them from sweaters be sure to get 100% wool and wash it in hot water before cutting.
4. Allow a soaker to air dry after changing the baby. It does not need to be washed every time.

How to Wash Wool Diaper Covers

Washing Wool Diaper Covers Requires Caution

You don't have to be afraid of washing your wool diaper covers, but you do have to be careful. If you had a microscope and used it to look at a fiber of wool, you would see that the surface of the fiber isn't smooth but is made up of interconnecting links or scales. If these scaly fibers are rubbed together too much during washing or drying the scales will interlock with each other, making the woven yarn shorter and thicker. This is called "felting" and is permanent and not reversible.

But don't be Afraid of Washing Wool Diaper Covers

Although you do need to be careful washing your wool diaper covers, it's easy if you follow our directions. We were nervous the first time we washed our wool but quickly discovered that washing wool diaper covers isn't scary after all! To avoid disaster do not swish, wring, pull, twist or stretch the wool in any way. Wet wool will remember what you did to it and resist going back into its original shape. Never use chlorine bleach on wool as it will cause the wool to yellow and break down the fibers. If you have a lot of wool to wash at once, try washing your wool diaper covers in your washing machine.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Beginning to End

Most of the steps for washing wool diaper covers are the same whether you use liquid wool wash, a wool wash bar, or if you make your own wool wash. Many parents choose to combine wool wash products; using liquid wool wash for general cleaning, a wool wash bar for spot cleaning heavily soiled

areas, and homemade wool wash for heavy lanolizing. We'll teach you how to use each of these products for washing your wool diaper covers, beginning to end!

Start in the beginning section. When you get to the middle you'll need to choose a wool wash product. Washing wool diaper covers is so easy you'll wish you had more wool to wash!

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Beginning

You'll need a few basic supplies for washing your wool diaper covers:

- Washing Wool Diaper Covers – Cover
- Sink or bucket: We like to use a gallon ice cream bucket for one item, but for more wool items you'll need to use the sink.
- Water: You will need warmish, but not hot water to clean your wool without shrinking or felting.
- Wool wash: Liquid, bar or homemade, we'll teach you how to use each for washing your wool.
- Towel: We use a bath sized towel for maximum absorption. Choose an older one in case any color bleeds out of the wool.

Here's how to get started:

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Sink

Rinse your wool covers in cool water and gently squeeze out excess water. This will remove any urine salts in the wool that will dry the fibers and retain odor.

Fill your sink or bucket with tepid (too cool for a bath but too warm to drink) water.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Middle

This is where you choose which wool wash product you prefer and learn how to use each of them:

Commercial liquid wool wash: Some wool washes that are scented with fragrance oils may cause bleeding. Unscented and wool wash scented with essential oils may be more gentle on your wool.

Wool wash bar: Many companies list the percentage of lanolin in their wool wash bar - a higher percentage of lanolin will provide more wetness protection.

Homemade liquid wool wash: It's super-easy to make your own wool wash, you'll save money, and you can customize the ingredients to fit your needs!

There are lots of steps to get through, but we promise they're not hard:

Washing Wool Diaper Covers – End-Soak

Soak your wool diaper cover for 10-15 minutes, without any further agitation. The wool wash will work on its own without your help.

Watch your wool in case of bleeding color. If your wool diaper cover is bleeding color you may want to shorten the soaking time.

Drain the water from the sink and gently squeeze some of the water from your wool diaper cover. Be sure to handle it carefully, supporting all of its weight. Don't let any parts dangle.

Refill the sink with cool water and place the wool diaper cover into the clean water to rinse. This will remove soap residue and any grime that didn't go down the drain.

Drain the water again and let the diaper cover drain in the sink after the water is all out, or move the diaper cover to a colander.

Gently squeeze the diaper cover to remove additional excess water.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Towel

Carefully place your wool diaper cover on the towel, roll it up into the towel and press to remove excess water.

Or place the diaper cover into your washing machine and run a "drain/spin" cycle to remove excess water. Just be sure to remove the diaper cover promptly so it's not forgotten and washed with the next load of laundry.

Lay the wool diaper cover out flat on a screen or another towel, shaping it gently back to its original shape and let it air dry.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers in the Washing Machine

No, we're not crazy! It is possible to wash some wool diaper covers in the washing machine. Note that we say **SOME** wool - not all wool is safe to wash in the washing machine so be careful when you choose wool for machine washing. Knitted or crocheted wool should **NEVER** be washed in the washing machine as it will shrink and felt and break your heart. These delicate woolies should always be washed by hand.

Washing wool diaper covers in a washing-machine is similar to washing by hand:

Fill the washing machine with warm water, but turn it off when it starts to agitate.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Measure

Add a generous amount of commercial wool wash, or make homemade wool wash except use 2 cups of water, 1 teaspoon lanolin and 1 tablespoon baby wash.

Submerge your wool diaper covers in the washing machine and let them soak 15 minutes like with handwashing.

Set the washing machine to "Spin" and run a complete spin cycle.

Lay the wool diaper cover out flat on a screen or another towel, shaping it gently back to its original shape and let it air dry.

This is a great method if you have a lot of wool to wash at one time, and using the spin cycle removes so much water that your wool will dry very quickly.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers with Liquid Wool Wash

Washing wool diaper covers with liquid wool wash is quick and easy. Be sure to choose a lanolin-rich wool wash to boost the waterproof qualities of your diaper cover between concentrated lanolizing. Eucalan Wool Wash can usually be found in local stores and comes in lavender scent in addition to the regular scent. There is also a wide variety of quality liquid wool wash available online including organic, all-natural, unscented, and scented varieties. Many of the scented varieties are incredibly yummy smelling!

Here's how to use a commercial liquid wool wash:

- Add your liquid wool wash to the water and swish with your hand to blend it in. You don't need to make bubbles
- Apply wool wash directly to stains if needed.
- Turn the wool diaper cover inside out, submerge it in the sink and gently squeeze it a few times - then STOP!

Yup, that's really all there is to it! Continue on to the end section to finish washing your wool diaper cover.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers with a Wool Wash Bar

Washing wool diaper covers with a wool wash bar is economical because the bars last a very long time, and you can't spill them. Be sure to choose a lanolin-rich wool wash bar to boost the waterproof qualities of your diaper cover between concentrated lanolizing. Just like liquid wool wash, a wide variety of quality wool wash bars are available online including organic, all-natural, unscented, and yummy-smelling scented varieties. In addition to washing wool, many wool wash bars can be used as moisturizing soap in the shower or in place of facial cleanser!

Here's how to use a wool wash bar:

- Rub your wool wash bar in your hands under the running water as the sink or bucket fills.
- Lightly apply the wool wash bar to the wet zone of the wool diaper cover and on any heavily soiled areas.
- Using your fingers, gently massage the diaper cover to work the soap into the wool. Do not scrub hard as you could felt the wool. Turn the wool diaper cover inside out and submerge in the sink.

That's not so hard now, is it? Continue on to the end section to finish washing your wool diaper cover.

Washing Wool Diaper Covers with Homemade Wool Wash

Although there are many great liquid wool washes and wool wash bars available, it's fun to make your own because you can customize your homemade wool wash by choosing your favorite scented ingredients and add essential oils if desired. And when you make your own wool wash you know exactly what's in it!

To make your own wool wash you need these supplies:

- Lanolin: We use Lansinoh, which is designed for breastfeeding, but any other solid lanolin will work. There are also liquid lanolins available online, just be sure to get the highest quality lanolin you can.
- Baby wash or shampoo: Any brand works here, choose your favorite scent for a special treat. You don't need much so it'll last a long time if it's only used for wool.
- Essential oil: EOs are optional, but can be added if you wish. Lavender is often used for babies because of its relaxing qualities. It also keeps moths away, as do Eucalyptus and Cedar.
- Cup or mug: You'll need one that holds at least a cup of liquid, and is microwave safe.
- To make your homemade wool wash:
 - Heat about a cup of water in the mug and microwave until it's hot.
 - Drop a pea-sized amount of lanolin into the hot water. Use more for additional items.
 - Add a drop or two of baby wash or shampoo.
 - Add a couple of drops of essential oil, if used
- Washing Wool Diaper Covers - Melt
 - Stir briskly until the lanolin has melted and is suspended in little drops throughout the water.
 - Mix your wool wash into the sink water and swish with your hand to blend it in. You don't need to make bubbles.
- Turn your diaper cover inside out, submerge it in the sink and gently squeeze it a few times, then STOP!

That's all there is to it! It takes a little longer than using a commercial product, but we think it's worth it because we like to do things yourself. Now you just need to go to the end section to finish washing your wool diaper cover.

All things considered, washing wool diaper covers isn't any harder than washing cloth diapers. We actually think that washing wool is better because unlike cloth diapers which need to be washed every two to three days, wool only needs washing every couple of weeks!

How often do I wash the wool items?

Wash your woolies when they are soiled, or whenever they start having an odor. It really depends on how often they are being used. Depending on the type of lanolin product you use, you may be able to go longer periods between lanolin treatments.

How often do I lanolize?

As wool diaper covers do not tend to need to be washed that often, we recommend only lanolizing when they are washed.

However, if you notice that they are starting to wick moisture, it is time to do another lanolizing. Also, brand new wool covers should be lanolized before first use as they are often not sufficiently lanolized to use as diaper covers.

How do I lanolize?

We recommend that the first lanolin treatment for a newly purchased woolie should be with solid or liquid lanolin.

If using solid lanolin take a teaspoon or so of the solid lanolin and put it in a microwave safe dish with some water and melt it in the microwave — 20-40 seconds or so (keep your eye on it). After it has melted, put a few drops of soap in the dish in order to emulsify the lanolin. This step is very important in order to prevent against lanolin streaks or clumps.

The soap you use is entirely up to you. Only a couple drops are needed to emulsify the lanolin. Stir the mixture and then add to your room temperature water sink.

Do not place the wool products into the water until the lanolin has been added. Once again, pouring hot water on top of the wool will cause shrinkage. Wait until the sink water has returned to room temperature and then add the wool. Swirl the water around and let the items soak for 30 minutes. Do not rinse or wring. Pat the items to remove excess water and then lay flat to dry.

We find that newly purchased wool occasionally requires two lanolin treatments to become fully waterproof, especially if being used for a heavy or nighttime wetter.

If you are using liquid lanolin, follow the same procedure as above with the exception of the melting phase. We still recommend emulsifying the lanolin.

What about lanolin spray?

Lanolin spray is another great option for your wool products. After washing your wool, spritz lanolin on the woolie and massage into the product. Focus on the bum portion of the product while spraying. Apply the spray evenly to assure that all key portions of the garment are covered. Lay the woolie out flat to dry. The spray also works for quick touch ups of the item when there is no time or real need to do a wash. Once again, we do not recommend this product for the initial lanolizing treatment.

A few cute woolies...

