



www.RockinGreenSoap.com

How to Wash Cloth Diapers

Over the past year, I have answered several thousand questions about washing cloth diapers. The funny thing is a portion of those emails aren't even about our cloth diaper detergent. Many moms come to us asking for help with the detergent that they have on hand, and we are more than happy to help whenever possible. More babies in cloth is good for everyone! The most common question I get asked is about the "perfect" cloth diaper wash routine.

It seems like everyone has a "perfect" routine. They have a "tried and true" method on what works for them, and they are eager to share it with others. Unfortunately, as many of you have found out, what works for one person won't work for another. This can make a seemingly simple process very complicated!

But here at Rockin' Green, we think of washing diapers as a math problem: $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5$.

There are 5 variables that come into play in the wash cycle, and once you understand these variables, you can adjust accordingly to get the best results possible. Sometimes there are things that you just can't change, so you have to work around them.

Variable #1: Your water.

This is something that we talk about A LOT at Rockin' Green, and for good reason. Water is the first and the most important thing that goes into your washing machine. It dilutes and carries away soils, and allows the detergent to do its job. But tap water is never pure. It contains impurities like minerals that can bind with detergent, and actually make it more difficult to get a good clean. This is one of those variables that you don't have much control over (unless you invest money in a water softener), so your best plan of attack is to know what you are working with and compensate for it with the other variables like detergent.



Variable # 2 The Swish.



I recently had a customer who was battling the dreaded stink, and couldn't for the life of her figure out why she had such trouble getting her diapers clean. Her wash routine sounded fine, she washed a small load every night, but still the stink endured. Then one day she got backed up on laundry and ended up doing 2 days worth of diapers instead of her usual one. And the diapers came out much better. She learned an important lesson about the power of the "swish". Swish or agitation is a very important component of any good wash routine.

The diapers need to not only move around in the wash tub, but they also need to rub up against one another. Think of how you wash your hands- do you run them under water to get lather, or do you rub your hands together?

With too many diapers in a load, they just rotate around the tub in a bunch. Not enough diapers and they swim around the wash basin blissfully (and dirtily) unaware of their neighbors. So if you have a top loader, load the machine to about the halfway point. For a front loader, you want to have enough items in the drum to where you can put a hands width between the top of the drum and the clothing.



Variable # 3 Temperature

Most machines have 3 settings. Cold, warm or hot....and as cloth diapering guru's you should be pretty familiar with the basic cloth diaper wash routine. Do a rinse on cold, a wash on hot, and then another rinse on cold, but there are some variables even in that. First off, what is your water heater set at? This can have a direct effect on how clean your diapers are. Most bacteria die when the water reaches a

temp of 130-140 degrees (and many detergent ingredients react faster in this temp range), so an adjustment in your water heater can make a big difference. Most diaper manufacturers warn against temps of 150 and over when PUL is involved, so keep your water heater set at around 130 for day to day washings. Note: It will usually come out of the tap about 10 degrees cooler

Disclaimer: Always check with your diaper manufacturer regarding recommended wash procedure and temperature thresholds, especially when PUL is involved.

Temperature can also play a part when it comes to stains. Did you know that the best way to treat a stain is by rinsing it out at the same temperature that the stain was created? So leave the cold rinsing for ice cream stains, and move the dial to warm for poop stains. They were created at 98.6 after all!

Variable #4 Time fixes all

“Rock a Soak” has become a common cloth diapering term, and there is some science behind it. The amount of time that your diapers are in the wash will also help determine your outcome. The chemicals in your detergent have different reaction times that can be affected by things like temperature and water quality, so you may find that a longer wash cycle in some cases gets you better results, because it allows the detergent to actually do its job as opposed to being flushed down the drain. If you have really hard water, or a water heater that isn't up to par....you can lengthen your wash cycle to compensate. Note: this is why front loader cycles take FOREVER) because they have to make up for the lack of swish. ☺



Variable #5 Detergent (You didn't think we would forget that did you?)



As a detergent manufacturer you would think that we would place this at the top of the list, but that just isn't the case. Don't get me wrong, I think that Rockin' Green cloth diaper detergent rocks – but its one piece of the puzzle. Within that black and green bag, you have the tools to overcome things like poor water quality and hardness (which is why we have 3 different formulas based on your water type), but you have to find the sweet spot

there too. Generally speaking you want to start off with 1-3 tbs, but you may adjust up or down depending on the other 4 variables.

Another tip: when it comes time to add the soap, try dropping down the water level in your machine. This will increase the concentration of soap and the swish! So in your initial and post rinses, you want to keep the water level high but in your hot wash with the soap try dropping it down to a medium water level. This should give you a better clean!

Ok....so seriously, just tell me what a “perfect” routine is already Kim!

By now, you probably know that there is no perfect routine. The key to finding the sweet spot is to look at every piece of the puzzle, and then adjust as needed. You may need to add a little more soap to make up for an overstuffed washer, crank up your water heater to make up for a lack of swish in your front loader, or lengthen the time your diapers spend in the washer to make up for hard water. And the list goes on and on....

I hope this helps some of you struggling with finding the “perfect” wash routine! Check us out at www.RockinGreenSoap.com for more wash tips and tools. And be on the lookout for Funk Rock- Ammonia Buster - Coming Soon!