

Cloth Pad Cleaning and Care

Washing cloth menstrual pads is really a lot easier than you might think. The care instructions vary by cloth pad manufacturer, but they're not usually that far different to these.

Prewash method #1) I has a bucket

Choose a container, as small or large as you find practical. It only needs to be about 1-2 litres, so an ice cream container or large jar is fine. A lid is nice for keeping prying eyes and nosy pets out. Put a few inches of cold water into the container. Drop your used pads in as needed. Every day, drain and refill the container with fresh water. The drained water is great for plants, or you can just pour it down the drain. You can add a laundry soaker (e.g. Napisan) or baking soda if you like, but you will not be able to use water afterwards if you do this. On wash day, just pour out the water (squeeze excess water out if you like) and dump the wet pads into the washing machine, alone or with other clothes.

Make sure you remember to change the water daily or they will stain with a uniform 'wash' - like if you get reds in with your whites.

Not at home?

A small cloth wet bag makes it easy to store your pads when you are away from home. You can pop them in as they are or rinse them first. Just remember to take them out when you get home, so they don't get all nasty.

Some wet bags have separate pockets for clean and used pads. Just make sure that your bag is water resistant if you plan to rinse the pads first.

Prewash method #2) I has another bucket

If you do a lot of washing, simply allow the pads to dry out in a dry bucket (or your hamper if you're so inclined) between washes. If you use this method be sure you wash often enough to avoid a mildew problem. You will need to soak the pads longer when you do the initial soak/wash in the machine to get them clean. Adding a laundry booster might help too.

You could also spray your pads with a laundry spray (check it's suitable for blood) before leaving them.

Prewash method #3) Rinse & dry

Rinse out your pads as they are used or at the end of the day. Then allow them to air dry until wash day.

On washing day:

On wash day, simply put your pads in the washing machine and wash (in COLD) as you would other clothes. If they have been especially stained, or if they've been allowed to dry you will need to soak them. Soak in COLD water for 30 minutes or longer. Then spin out the water and wash the pads on COLD. You don't need to use a lot of detergent, but do use plenty of water. Whatever detergent you use to wash your underwear should be fine for your pads too. Just remember not to use fabric softener.

Tumble dry or line dry according to the manufacturer's directions. Just remember that tumble drying will shorten the lifespan of any pad, and may not be suitable for some fabrics, especially leak proof fabrics.

Tips

- Never used chlorine bleach. It weakens the fibres and may ruin your pads. Oxygen soakers or enzyme sprays are good enough.
- Never wash soiled pads in hot water, it will set the iron from your blood, making a permanent stain.
- Do not use fabric softener. It will make the fabric less absorbent and can lead to leaks.
- If you have bothersome stains, try using sunlight to bleach your pads naturally. If this is not sufficient, or you don't have a place where you can discretely sun your pads, try using a small amount of an oxygen based cleaner such as Napisan Oxy Action, or your preferred equivalent.
- A FEW drops of tea tree oil in the wash water can help disinfect and deodorize your pads.
- Should your pads develop a musty smell from sitting in an enclosed space (like the bottom of your purse if you forget them for a few days....) you can use white vinegar in the wash water followed by an extra rinse to be sure all the vinegar is gone.
- If you develop a yeast infection while using your pads it can contaminate the pads. Either tea tree oil or vinegar in some soaking water can help remove any potential stowaways. You can also sanitise your pads by giving them a second wash with very hot water (and tea tree or vinegar if desired) after you've washed any blood out. Canisten rinse, or similar, in your final rinse is also appropriate.

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