

Washing Cloth diapers \*should\* be simple and many people have no problem but sometimes they can start to smell a bit funky.. if they do, the culprit is likely how you are washing them.

There are two main types of diaper stink – ammonia and barnyard. Both of these should not be considered normal, after washing your diapers should smell clean!

### **Ammonia:**

- is recognizable by a “burn your nosehairs” smell
- often will become obvious only after diapers are wet (they will smell clean out of the wash)
- is caused by bacteria which convert urea in urine into ammonia
- may become more of an issue during toddler years as they pee larger volumes

### **Barnyard:**

- often smells like a barn or cattle truck, but can also smell stale, fishy, or just plain stinky
- is more obvious when diapers are warm (if they have just come out of the dryer, for example)
- in severe cases, diapers will smell even when they’re “clean” and on the shelf
- is caused by bacteria and soil left over in the diapers after washing
- \*Can\* cause [rashes](#).

If you have either one of these problems, **something is wrong with your wash routine and must be corrected**. Remember, the way to get clean diapers is with a good wash routine, NOT through frequent stripping/bleaching or “deep cleaning”. Even if you get your diapers back to square one, if your wash routine is not corrected, the stink will return sooner or later.

### **\*Troubleshooting your wash routine:**

**A. What detergent are you using?** 1) Is it cloth diaper safe 2) Is it “strong” enough.

While eco-friendly detergents can be used successfully, if you are having frequent smell issues, you may want to temporarily switch to Tide powder (Orange box, not yellow) to deep clean your diapers and then start troubleshooting with your preferred detergent.

### **B. Are you using enough? (or too much?) detergent**

- Some manufacturers have suggested using ½ of the recommended amount in detergent for cloth diapers. This is normally not enough because cloth diapers are often heavily soiled and need the recommended amount (and sometimes a bit more for eco-friendly detergents).
- One easy way to see if you are using too much is to look at the water coming out of the machine at the end of your wash cycle (or add an extra rinse). If you see bubbles, it is likely that you are using too much detergent. If this is the case, run your diapers through a quick wash (with no detergent) and add an extra rinse to remove all excess detergent, then reduce the amount of detergent the next time you wash them. (While suds in the rinse water could also be a sign of hard water, in Ottawa, this is less likely).

### **C. What is your wash routine?**

- Once your baby starts eating solids, you \*may\* need to adjust your wash routine to include a quick wash with or without a little bit of detergent to help remove most of the pee and poop residuals from the diapers. Then open the machine, fluff the diapers away from the drum and perform your usual wash.
- Only fill your front-loader half full (or ¾ full) of diapers to allow enough room to agitate, and have enough articles that the diapers have clothing to agitate against. If you don’t have enough diapers, use small items (like baby clothes, adult socks/underwear, or face cloths) to fill up the rest.

### **D. What is your water like?**

So Ottawa water is pretty soft, and not likely to cause an issue, but you can always test your water

How to test water?

- 1) Bring your tap water to most pet stores (like pet value) and ask them to test you “aquarium” water for free.
- 2) Purchase some test strips online (La peptide ourse has them for only a \$1 and you can ask for them to

free.

- 2) Purchase some test strips online (La petite ourse has them for only a \$1 and you can ask for them to just mail it in an envelope to reduce shipping costs).

<https://lapetiteourse.ca/boutique/en/accessories/rockin-green/water-test-strip-p261c36/>.

If you find that your water is more than 100 ppm Calcium carbonate, it is leaning towards being hard (hard water by definition is 120 ppm).

The simplest option is to use a commercial detergent (such as tide powder) which contains softening agents which will help bind the hard water minerals (like Calcium and Magnesium) allowing the actual detergent to focus on fighting dirt and stains. Unfortunately many eco-friendly detergents contain less of these softening agents so they may be more problematic in hard water. You may also want to use a little more detergent in your laundry.