



## Cleaning Baby Clothes

Washability is definitely something to consider. Be sure to look at the labels not only for size, flame-resistance, or snug-fitting information but also for washing instructions. Unless you relish the thought of hand-washing a lot of baby clothes and frequently replacing those that don't hold up well, we suggest you give some serious thought to the durability and washability of the baby clothes you buy—especially your baby's everyday outfits, Onesies, and sleepers.



- **Washing.** Because newborns tend to have sensitive skin (and because you don't know who has handled the clothing and with what before it made its way into your possession), it's generally a good idea to wash all clothes prior to using them. An exception might be outerwear such as coats and jackets that don't have much contact with the skin (and tend not to wash and dry easily). As a helpful hint, consider putting small items such as socks in a mesh bag for washing and drying and remember to fasten any Velcro tabs (such as on bibs) before tossing them into the fray to avoid snagging other clothes.
- **Detergents.** It is a common recommendation that baby clothes should be washed separately, using special "baby" detergents that supposedly leave fewer residues and are therefore less likely to cause skin irritation. In reality, we've found that many if not most parents simply toss their baby's clothes in with the rest of the family's laundry without causing any problems. That said, it is worth paying attention to the fact that detergents in general don't strip away the flame-retardant properties of sleepwear, but soap flakes can. Given that information, you can choose your detergent as we do—buy one that smells good and gets the dirt out, and only feel compelled to invest in a milder "baby" detergent (or hypoallergenic/fragrance-free "adult" detergent) if your baby develops any signs of skin irritation.
- **Stain removal.** The best approach to managing stains made by breast milk, formula, spit-up, or poop is to try wiping or rinsing off the offending substance as much as you can while it's still relatively fresh. We realize that this may be easier said than done—especially if you find yourself in the middle of a diaper change or feeding with a clothing stain that is settling itself in for the long haul—but if you can remove even some of it with a baby wipe or soak the clothes in some water and detergent, you'll be glad you did. We also suggest stocking your laundry room with a good stain remover and designating a place for soaking stained or soiled clothing.

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