



## How to Wear and Care for Cloth Pads

### Which way up?

Some Obsidian Star pads are made with the print side up, some are made with the print side down. This is to accommodate customers who have a preference for either way. So to help you know which way up the pads go, Obsidian Star cloth pads have a brand label on the back (underpants side) of the pad – this tells you the absorbency, if it has waterproofing or not and helps you tell which way up the pad goes. Pantyliners and pads that are reversible and have no waterproofing don't have labels, so that they can be worn either side up.



H = Heavy  
R = Regular  
L = Light

Darker purple means the pad has a PUL (Polyurethane laminated fabric) waterproofing layer inside.



Empty Stars are used on pocket or Ai2 pads, where the absorbency is adjusted by adding additional inserts.

Lighter purple means the pad does not have any waterproofing layer inside it but the side of the pad with the label is designed to go against your underpants.



### Which end goes where?

Most cloth pads can be worn with either end at the “front” (eg closest to your pubic bone) or “back” (closest to your butt). Even if one end is longer or wider than the other. If a pad has one end longer/wider than the other then you may choose to wear that end at the front or back, wherever you need more coverage. Some people find they are “front bleeders” and need more coverage at the front for example.

### Is my pad Waterproof? Or leakproof?

Pads made with “PUL” fabric, are considered “waterproof” or “leakproof” for the purposes of a cloth pad – this means that the PUL fabric is considered to be a waterproof (leak-proof) fabric, and a pad made with this fabric should not leak straight through. Pads made without PUL fabric should be checked regularly for signs that the flow is starting to soak through the pad. You may find that you need to use a pad with a higher absorbency rating, or for a shorter time before changing if you are using non-waterproofed pads.

However, pads may still “leak” if your flow runs off the side of the pad – either from the top fabric not “grabbing” the flow quickly enough, or from the pad not being the right shape to catch the flow. Please also be aware that the absorbent core inside the pad in most cloth pads, including Obsidian Star brand, does not reach right out to the very edges and not into the wing. There is approx 1-2cm space around the edges of the pad that will not have full absorbency as the rest of the pad. So this should be considered when selecting the pad lengths. You should not be wearing pads where you are bleeding right to the edge, as these pads would be considered too short for you. If in doubt, it is safer to choose a pad that is slightly longer than you think you need, rather than bleeding off the ends!

### Absorbencies

Obsidian Star cloth pads use the following absorbency levels:

**“Everyday”** – Pantyliners designed for daily discharge or very light spotting. When you want just a little something to prevent your underpants feeling damp. Generally equivalent to 2 layers of flannelette. These are not suitable for incontinence or menstrual use.

**“Light”** - Light flow. Suitable as a pantyliner, for cup backup, mild stress incontinence, between periods or light flow. May be able to cope with a “regular” or “moderate” flow if changed regularly. These pads generally have 1 layer bamboo fleece core.

**“Regular”** - Suitable for use through most of your period. Can cope with heavy flow if changed regularly. These pads generally have 2 layers bamboo fleece core. (Can also be considered “medium” or “moderate”)

**“Heavy”** - Suitable for heavy flow, post partum, overnight or incontinence. These pads generally have 3 layers bamboo fleece core.

### Cloth Pads & Underpants

It is important to wear snug fitting underpants as the pads need to be held snugly against the body to work properly and to avoid them slipping around. Different shaped underpants may work better with some pads. The crotch of your underpants should ideally be the same width or a little wider than the snapped width of your cloth pads. If the underpants are too narrow, they may not hold the pad in place securely.

If a winged pad slides around in your underpants, it is usually due to the underpants being too loose, or the wings not snapping tightly enough. Cloth pads seem to tend to move into position where the wings will be directly between your legs. So if you are trying to wear the pad further forward or back from this, you may want to try a pad with a longer section at the front or back, so that you maintain the coverage you need, but with a pad where the wings are located straight down from your crotch.

## When to change pads

How long you can go before changing pads will depend on your flow and preference. Some people like to change their pads frequently to remain dry, other people are happy to leave the pads on longer. This of course will depend on how much you flow, and also the fabric the pad is made from can make it feel wet quickly or feel dry for longer. Many people change their pads when they go to the toilet, as this is not only most convenient, but pads can feel very cold and wet after the brief moment they have been away from the skin! Changing every 2-4 hours is about average for a moderate flow and a medium absorbency pad. You would change as often as you would do with a disposable pad.

Pads without waterproofing should be checked for leaking through every so often until you are familiar with your flow and how well the pad performs. Simply look at the under side to check that the blood is not seeping through. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell when a pad needs to be changed, particularly if they are dark fabric, or synthetic topped which can feel dry even when the pad is quite full. One way to tell when the pad needs changing is to feel how heavy it is. Pads become heavier as they become more "full", so comparing how the pad feels in the centre, front or back (wherever you bleed most and least) can give an indication of how full the pad is. If in doubt - change!

## Washing

When you change pads, there are different methods to deal with washing the pad. Lifestyle as well as your blood's tendency to stain can determine which method you find suits you best.

- **Soaking Method** - Place the used pad in a container of plain cold water to soak until you wash them. You may leave them soaking until the end of your period and wash them all together, or wash at the end of each day. A little teatree, eucalyptus or lavender essential oil in the soaking water helps combat any odour, however it is recommended to change the soaking water every day. The soaking water can be used on the garden as "grey water". Rinsing the pads out before putting them in the container to soak can help prevent odours.
- **"Dry Pailing"** - That is to not soak them. Just place the used pads into your laundry basket (or empty washing machine) and leave them until you wash them. Some shapes of cloth pad can fold up to keep them tidy. Fold the ends of the pad into the centre, then snap the wings around to keep it secure. If this folding technique puts strain on the wings due to the shape of the pad, it is not recommended. Some people can find that allowing the blood to dry can lead to staining however, and prefer to rinse the pads out or leave them to soak.
- **Rinsing** - Rinse them out straight away after you take them off, until almost clean, then either drypail or soak. This method has the advantage that the majority of the blood is removed from the pad before it is left to sit until it is washed, which can help prevent odours and staining.
- **"Shower Stomp" Method** - Some people like to rinse the pads in the shower to save water. To do this, lay your pads on the floor of the shower, and as you have your shower, stand on the pads (being careful not to stand on the snaps ☺), to "squish" them and force water in/out of the pads to help rinse them clean. The soap and shampoo runoff from your body can help clean them. Make sure you remove the cloth pads before conditioning your hair, as the conditioner may affect the absorbency of the pads. If you feel this has cleaned the pads sufficiently, you can wring them out then hang them to dry. Or you can machine wash them to make sure they are clean.

Cloth pads can generally be handwashed or machine washed, on hot, cold or warm setting. Hot wash only if you have thoroughly rinsed the pads first, as hot water can set stains. Handwashing and rinsing in warm water seems to be fine (doesn't cause staining) for most people.

Tumble drying pads is not recommended, as synthetic fibres (eg fleece or PUL) and snaps may be effected by high heat (also be careful of the snaps as they can become hot to touch). If you need to iron the pad (cotton can become wrinkled), do so on a low heat and iron only the cotton side (do not iron exposed PUL or synthetic fabric), being careful not to touch the snaps with the iron.

You should not use fabric softeners or dryer sheets on cloth pads, as this can cause them to repel liquid. A little baking soda rubbed onto fresh blood before washing can help remove stains, as can allowing them to hang to dry in the sunlight. You can also try commercial stain removers. If you have left the pads soaking too long and they have developed an odour, you can try re-washing them with a little disinfectant, "napisan" or essential oil, then allow them to hang to dry in the sunlight.