

How many sanitary pads will I need after the birth?

Expert: Sally Sago, BSc [[See Biography](#)]

Question: How many pads will I need after the birth?

Sally Sago: Immediately following delivery your [lochia \(postnatal bleeding from the womb\)](#) is usually bright red, very heavy and may contain [clots](#). Over the first six to 12 hours this should lessen when resting. However, when you get up and move around you may experience a 'rush' of blood loss. This is because the blood 'pools' inside the body, escaping when you change position.

In hospital your midwives will provide small disposable sheets to sit on in case of leakage to begin with. If you are at home you may want to investigate bed protection products, such as mattress covers, to protect your bed.

If it is your first baby and you have used tampons during your periods in the past, the amount of blood may be a bit of a surprise! (Tampons are not recommended for use after childbirth as they may lead to infection — [click here](#) for more info on this.)

It is difficult to say how often you will need to change your sanitary pad or towel, but possibly every one to two hours to begin with and then, over the next two days, possibly every three to four hours. It is important to buy specific maternity pads for straight after birth. They are longer, softer and much more absorbent than ordinary ones. Buy at least two or three packs of 12. Many women now buy disposable knickers for the first few days, as there is a high likelihood of leakage. If you do not want or like disposable knickers, then high-waisted old cotton knickers will do the job just as well. Small skimpy knickers will not hold your pads in place properly and this can be embarrassing as well as uncomfortable if you have [bruising or stitches](#).

Hygiene and comfort are really important after having your baby and you need to change your pads as frequently as is necessary to stay clean and fresh. Using a bidet can help, or washing down with a jug of water or a shower spray after using the toilet. Bathing at least once a day is also a good habit. Plain bath water is shown to be most effective, although some aromatherapists will advise on oils that can be added. To find a registered aromatherapist, contact the [Aromatherapy Organisations Council](#). Salt and many soaps are not recommended for use in the bath in the first week or whilst open wounds are healing.

After the first few days your blood loss will lessen. It will change colour from bright red to more pink and watery and then brown over the second and third week.

If you are [breastfeeding](#) you may notice that your loss is heavier after you feed your baby as the suckling also causes your womb to tighten, forcing out any discharge. It may also become a little heavier if you are busy and not taking time to pace yourself with adequate rest times.

Towards the end of the first week you may be able to change to normal sanitary pads that stick inside your knickers and by the fourth week you will probably be wearing panty liners. The secret is not buy too many of anything as your needs will change as the days pass, but, on the other hand, make sure you don't run out of essentials!

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