



Which way up?

Unless the pad has waterproofing, it probably doesn't matter which way up you wear it. Often the softer side of the pad is intended to be the top (skin side). Some brands may use a printed fabric side up, some may use a printed fabric side down. Obsidian Star pads are made both ways, depending on the pad, as some people like to have the printed side up, some people prefer not to bleed on the pretty prints ☺

If the pad has waterproofing, then you need to make sure you wear them the right way up. I attach an iron-on-label to the underside/bottom of the cloth pads, to tell you the absorbency and help you tell which way up the pad goes. So that label side goes against your underpants. I don't put labels on reversible pads so that the label won't irritate you no matter which side up they go.

Some brands of cloth pad have stitching lines ("Channel lines") sewn on the top of the pad, where the core is, which is also an indication of which way up the pad goes. In these pads, the stitching side is worn up (skin side), as the stitching is intended to help keep the flow in the centre of the pad (and if the pad has no waterproofing, you may leak through the stitching if you wear it upside down). Most Obsidian Star cloth pads do not feature this channel stitching, as I sew the core layer to a flannelette layer inside the pad ("hidden core" method), rather than sewing it directly to the top layer. Occasionally Obsidian Star pads will feature this stitching as a decorative feature, and those pads should be worn with stitching up.

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 than the other (eg the wings aren't in the centre of the pad), or one end wider than the other - then you may choose to wear that longer/wider 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.

The "Mini" to "Maiden" size Obsidian Star brand cloth pads (not including any "wide back" variations) have both ends being equal, and can be worn with either end to the front or back. The "Hybrid" length pads have one end longer than the other, and are designed to be worn either end to the front, depending on where you need more coverage. The "Priestess" and "Goddess" length pads are designed to be worn with the flared end to the back, however you may wear the "Priestess" size with the wider section to the front if you wish.

Is my pad Waterproof? Or leakproof?

Obsidian Star 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. So a pad made with this fabric should not leak straight through, so long as you are wearing a pad of the right absorbency level for your flow, are changing to a fresh pad about every 3-4 hours (and wearing it the correct side up!). Pads with PUL in them will have a label ironed onto the back (underpants side) of the pad. This PUL layer may be hidden inside the pad (with a cotton or other fabric layer as the outer) or it may be used as the backing for the pad.

Pads made without PUL fabric, are not "leakproof" or "Waterproof" at all, including microfleece backed pads - and should be checked regularly for signs that the flow is starting to soak through the pad. A pad with a PUL layer can be worn for longer than a pad without PUL – so you may find that you need to use a pad with a higher absorbency rating 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 (a pad topped in bamboo velour, minky or sherpa sometimes works better for a gushy/heavy flow), 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 1cm space around the edges of the pad that will not have full absorbency as the rest of the pad. So take that into account 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" – 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.

"Medium" or "Moderate" - 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 "regular")

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

Cloth Pads & Underpants

Different shaped underpants may have an effect on the way the pads snap around at the crotch. Sometimes wider underpants will gather ("bunch") in at the crotch when a pad is snapped around them. This generally does not affect the performance of the pad, and the underpants will flare back out to their normal shape at the ends of the pad. Often the underpants bunch/gather slightly while being worn anyway, but you can't see it. Some pads have 2 snap settings to allow you to adjust the width to suit your needs.

The Case of the Travelling Cloth Pad!

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. The wings need to snap securely around the underpants, and snug fitting cotton underpants are recommended for use with cloth pads (synthetic underpants can be too "slippery"). 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 or two if not washing straight away. The soaking water can be used on the garden as "grey water". Rinsing the pads out before putting them in the container to soak, and/or daily emptying the water out, rinsing all the pads and refilling the water, 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 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 (the last thing you want with a cloth pad!). 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.