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How to Care for Your Cycling Gear

Regardless of what type of bike you ride, you should take good care of your cycling gear as it can go a long way towards ensuring that you enjoy every minute in the saddle. Modern fabrics are designed to boost your performance and keep you dry and comfortable. By taking proper care of your cycling gear, you can considerably improve its lifespan and keep it functioning optimally.

So, what should you do to make sure your bib shorts, jersey, baselayer and jacket last as long as possible? By following these simple guidelines, you can keep your gear looking and feeling like new.

Wash It Immediately Or Hang It Up

The best way to treat your gear is to wash it immediately after every use. However, we all know that this isn't always practical, so the second-best option is to hang it up after use. The longer your gear stays in a damp pile on the floor, the more bacteria will breed, and that can lead to lasting unpleasant odours. Leaving your gear scrunched up in a hamper is also a bad idea.

Rather, turn everything inside out and hang it up outside or in your laundry room. This will help to prevent it from smelling funky, but it's not ideal, as the salt from perspiration can damage the fabric.

Make Sure To Pre-Wash

This is especially important if you've just come off a muddy mountain bike trail or a wet road. Grime and mud should never be allowed to dry on your gear as this can cause stains.

Rinse off your cycling clothing when you hose down your bike and shoes. This will remove the excess dirt and loosen up the embedded grime. Just remember that soaking for long periods is not recommended as this can damage the elasticity of the fibres.

Take Time To Prep

Checks and prep is an important part of every ride. Turning your bib shorts inside out is always a good idea. This exposes the chamois for a thorough clean and protects the printed designs on the outside. Make sure to do up all the zippers to stop the zipper pulls from getting damaged. This also prevents the zipper teeth from snagging on other items and causing abrasion.

Most importantly, ensure that all your Velcro tags are securely fastened. The sticky side of Velcro tabs can be extremely damaging to high-performance fabrics and will easily cause pilling. For heavy grime or mud stains, it's a good idea to pre-treat with a regular stain-release product.

Machine Wash Is Best

Many cyclists think that regular machine washing will damage their kit and reduce its lifespan. This is simply not true. These days, washing machines have multiple cycle options suitable for delicate sports fabrics.

Hand washing is actually potentially more damaging in the long term as it's nearly impossible to remove all the dirt by hand. These fine dirt particles grind away at the fabric and, over time, they degrade the fibres.

With top-loader machines that have a central agitator, it's important to put your bib shorts in a mesh laundry bag. Otherwise, they can get tangled around the agitator and easily get stretched or even tear. Always check the manufacturer's washing instructions too, as some items, like gloves, should only be hand-washed.

Keep It Cool

By far the biggest threat to your cycling kit is hot water. Just one hot wash can cause irreparable damage to sports fabric as it can slightly melt the delicate fibres. This can reduce their ability to wick away sweat and can also degrade the elastic. Always check the manufacturer's temperature recommendation and make sure to never exceed it.

Select a short wash cycle and a low spin to avoid any excessive abrasion. Most washing machines have a specific low temperature and spin setting for sports fabric. Some cycling gear, like shell jackets, can handle a warm water wash without any damage, but a cold wash is best.

Know What Detergent To Use

With so many speciality sport fabric detergent products on the market, it can be a bit overwhelming to decide which one to use. Essentially, they are all very similar and you can use a standard detergent without any problems. Just keep in mind that laundry detergent is usually highly concentrated and that a little goes a long way.

The most important tip to remember is to never use bleach. The harsh chemicals in all bleach, even the non-chlorinated variety, will irreversibly damage the fibres of the high-performance fabric.

Equally important is to never use any fabric softeners. These work by leaving a coating of residue on the inside of the material that will diminish their ability to breathe and wick out moisture. The residue will also damage the elastic in the fabric and can drastically reduce its lifespan.

Always Air Dry

Hot air from a dryer is just as much of a hazard to your cycling gear as hot water. The hot temperatures will melt the fibres and damage the elastic.

Rather, hang your gear up to air dry in the shade. Avoid hanging it in the sun as this will cause the colours to fade and is unnecessary, as the lightweight material dries out quickly.

Clean Your Helmet Too

If you're riding an electric commuter bike most of the time, all your helmet needs is a quick rinse. But if you're mountain biking or regularly working up a sweat, you may need to give it a little more TLC.

If your helmet starts to smell a bit, wash the inside pads in cold water with a mild detergent or shampoo. Always make sure you rinse your helmet out completely or the soapy residue will trickle down into your eyes on your next ride. As with the rest of your gear, dry your helmet pads out of direct sunlight.

Care For Your Cycling Gear - It Pays Off

By following these simple recommendations, you can ensure that your cycling kit stays in the best possible condition. This allows you to keep enjoying its high-performance features for as long as possible, odour and germ-free.

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