

Newborn Skin Care (Normal)

Bathing

You may bathe your baby daily, but for the first few months, 2 or 3 times a week is often enough for a full body surface bath. Clean your baby's face and hands with warm water whenever they become dirty throughout the day.

Keep the bath water level below the navel or give sponge baths until a few days after the navel cord has fallen off. Submerging the cord could cause infection or interfere with its drying out and falling off. Getting the cord a little wet doesn't matter .

Use tap water without any soap or with a nondrying baby soap. Don't forget to wash the face and neck;; otherwise, chemicals from dribbled milk and food can build up and cause an irritated rash. Also rinse off the eyelids with water.

Don't forget to wash the genital area. However, when you wash the inside of the female genital area (the vulva), never use soap. Rinse the area with plain water and wipe from front to back to prevent irritation. This practice and the avoidance of any bubble baths before puberty may prevent many urinary tract infections and vaginal irritations. At the end of the bath, rinse your baby well;; soap residue can be irritating.

Changing Diapers

After you remove a wet diaper, just rinse your baby's bottom off with a wet washcloth or diaper wipe. After soiled diapers, rinse the bottom under running warm water or in a basin of warm water. You can't clean stools off the skin with diaper wipes alone. Millions of bacteria will remain and cause diaper rashes. After you clean the rear, cleanse the genital area by wiping front to back with a wet cloth. In boys, stool can hide under the scrotum, so rinse carefully there. If you have a girl, carefully clean the creases of the vaginal lips (labia).

Shampoo

Wash your baby's hair once or twice a week with a special tear-

free baby shampoo that doesn't sting the eyes. Don't be concerned about hurting the anterior fontanelle (soft spot on the head). It is well protected.

Lotions, Ointments, and Powder

Newborn skin normally does not require any ointments or creams. Especially avoid putting any oil, ointment, or greasy substance on your baby's skin because this will almost always block the small sweat glands and lead to pimples or a heat rash. If the skin starts to become dry and cracked, use a baby lotion, hand lotion, or moisturizing cream twice a day. Apply it within 3 minutes after a bath to trap moisture in the skin.

Cornstarch powder can be helpful for preventing rashes in areas of friction. Avoid talcum powder because it can cause a serious chemical pneumonia if inhaled into the lungs.

Umbilical Cord

Use what is called Dry Cord Care (natural drying). Check the skin around the base of the cord once a day. Clean away any dried secretions. Use a wet cotton swab or damp cloth. Then dry carefully.

You will need to push down on the skin around the cord to get at this area. You may also need to bend the cord a little to get underneath it.

Caution: don't use any rubbing alcohol or other germ killer. Reason: dry cords fall off sooner. (Exception: instructed by your healthcare provider to use alcohol).

Air exposure helps the cord stay dry and eventually fall off, so keep diapers folded down below the cord area.

Fingernails and Toenails

Cut the toenails straight across to prevent ingrown toenails. When you cut fingernails, round off the corners of the nails so your baby doesn't scratch himself or others.

Trim the nails once a week after a bath, when the nails are softened by the bath. Use clippers or special baby scissors. This job usually takes two people unless you do it while your child is asleep.