

Fact Sheet

Nappy Rash



It can be common for babies to develop red angry skin in the nappy area, especially in older babies who sleep through the night without a nappy change. The newer disposable nappies now make nappy rash less common. If it occurs it can be treated effectively but it is better to try to prevent the rash developing.

What causes nappy rash?

Wetness from urine and faeces

- Wetness is the main cause of nappy rash. The longer the nappy is wet or dirty the higher the risk.

Chemical irritation

- Urine and faeces contain irritating substances which may lead to a rash if they are in contact with the skin for too long.
- Too much soap can irritate the skin and dry it out.
- Detergents and soaking solutions can irritate if they remain in the cloth nappy. Wash and rinse nappies well.

Prevention

- Change nappies as soon as possible after they become wet or soiled and preferably once during the night.
- Clean your baby with good quality baby wipes or warm water and a cloth.
- Let your baby have some 'nappy free' time daily, though not in the sun.
- Avoid using plastic pants.
- Wash and rinse all cloth nappies thoroughly.

- After each nappy change, apply a thin layer of protective cream to your baby's skin eg. zinc and castor oil.
- Try good quality disposable nappies.

If a rash develops

See your doctor if a rash develops and persists for more than a few days. It may mean that there is an underlying skin infection present such as thrush or a bacterial infection. Thrush is a fungal infection, which thrives in warm moist areas. It is almost always present in significant nappy rashes and can occur on top of other rashes.

The doctor will usually prescribe a cream to treat the infection.

Difficult to treat nappy rash

When a nappy rash is difficult to treat, it may indicate that there is an underlying skin condition such as seborrhoeic dermatitis or psoriasis. This needs to be diagnosed and treated by a doctor.

Remember

- Keep your baby's skin as dry as possible.
- Give your baby some nappy free time
- Rinse nappies well.
- Use protective creams and ointments.
- If the rash does not clear, see your doctor

We gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by the NSW Child and Family Health CNC Network in developing this fact sheet.

This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for your child.

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