

Let's Talk About...

Diaper Rash

Most babies have a diaper rash sometime during their diaper-wearing days. There are simple things you can do to help.

How do I recognize a diaper rash?

At first, the skin under the diaper may become red. Sometimes only the skin folds are red. A diaper rash may be pink to dark red and can have broken, bleeding sores.

What causes a diaper rash?

Infants get a diaper rash because of lengthy and repeated contact of the skin with urine (pee) and stool (poop). When urine and stool mix, they produce the chemical **ammonia** [uh-MOH-nee-uh]. Ammonia is irritating to the skin and increases the chance the skin will break down.

Other things that increase a child's risk for developing a diaper rash include:

- Diarrhea
- Long-term use of antibiotics
- A warm, humid environment
- Chemical sensitivity
- Chafing (soreness due to rubbing)
- Certain foods

How do I prevent my child from getting a diaper rash?

- **Keep your child's diaper area clean and dry** by changing the diaper every 1 to 3 hours, or whenever the diaper is wet or soiled.
- **When you change your child's diaper, wash the area with water.** If your child has a bowel movement, use baby wipes free of alcohol or fragrances, and then gently pat dry. Always clean in the folds of the skin. Wash girls from the front to back. **This prevents bladder infections.** If your boy is not circumcised, gently pull back his foreskin, clean the skin, and gently replace the foreskin.



- **You can apply a thin layer of protective ointment**, such as Critic-Aid Clear, A & D ointment, Desitin, iLEX, Mustela 1-2-3 cream, Carrington Moisture Barrier cream, Calmoseptine, or even Bag Balm to the diaper area. This will protect the skin from ammonia irritation. Apply the ointment only to thoroughly cleaned skin that has been patted dry.
- **If you use cloth diapers, wash them this way:**
 - **Soak soiled diapers in commercial soap or a Borax solution** (½-cup Borax to 1 gallon of water).
 - **Wash the diapers with a mild detergent** such as Dreft or Ivory Snow. Avoid harsh detergents, presoaks, bleaches, and fabric softeners. These may leave leftover chemicals that irritate your child's skin. Rinse the diapers completely 2 to 3 times.
 - **Add ½-cup to 1 cup of vinegar to the last rinse.** This will get rid of any ammonia in the diapers.
 - **Use fragrance-free dryer sheets** in the dryer.
- **Remove your child's diaper for periods during the day** to expose the diaper area to air.

What can I do to treat my child's diaper rash?

- **Leave your child's diaper off during supervised tummy time.** Turn your baby onto their belly and leave their bottom exposed to the air.
- **Follow the same instructions under "How do I prevent my child from getting a diaper rash?"** (see [page 1](#)).
- **You don't need to scrub off the creams or ointments used.** Remove the urine and stool from the outer surface of the ointment and then add more ointment. The ointment acts as a protective barrier. It can be helpful to use different kinds of ointment. Some rashes respond to simple home remedies. Try applying Maalox liquid to the skin as a barrier and then adding a coat of protective ointment.

When should I call my doctor?

Contact your pediatrician or the clinic nurse if your child's:

- Diaper rash does not improve after 2 to 3 days or looks infected
- Urine (pee) smells bad, is dark in color, or contains blood

Questions for my doctor

Notes

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