



Diaper Rash

Most children have diaper rash some time during the time they wear diapers. Since diaper rashes are uncomfortable and can become infected, you will want to try to prevent them. If a diaper rash does appear, you will want to do whatever you can to speed the healing process.

What causes diaper rash?

Most diaper rashes develop because of irritation, a yeast infection or an adverse reaction.

When do I need to call my child's health care provider?

Most often, the simple measures suggested here will slowly soothe and heal the irritated skin in the diaper area, but don't hesitate to call your health care provider if:

- The rash does not improve within two to three days when you treat as described below.
- The rash seems severe.
- Your baby has a diaper rash and fever.
- Your child seems very fussy or doesn't run and play.

Care and prevention

The most important thing you can do to treat diaper rash – and to prevent rash in the future – is to **keep the diaper area as clean as possible.**

The best way to do this is:

- Change your baby's diaper as soon as he wets or soils it or at least every one to three hours during the day. Check the diaper at night too, perhaps before you go to sleep. If it is wet or soiled, change it.
- Clean the area gently and thoroughly at each diaper change. You can use warm water and a mild soap. Pat the skin dry. Avoid using soaps that contain perfumes or other additives that might irritate the skin.
- Avoid using plastic pants when the child who has diaper rash is in the crib, bed or playpen. Fasten the diaper loosely to allow the moisture next to the skin to dry. Try to find a time during the day when the baby can go without a diaper; leave it off for 10 minutes once or twice a day.

The following may help prevent diaper rash or promote healing of diaper rash:

- When your baby has a diaper rash, lightly apply products such as cornstarch or a light coat of Desitin three or four times a day. (Make sure the skin is dry before application.) If the diaper rash gets worse or doesn't heal up after using one of these products for a few days, don't use it anymore.
- Avoid using lotions that may contain perfumes or other additives. These additives may cause further irritation.
- If you use cloth diapers at home, wash in a mild detergent such as Dreft or Ivory Snow and an extra hot water rinse. Avoid harsh detergents, presoaks, bleaches and fabric softeners, since they may leave residues that irritate the skin.
- Avoid baby powder. It can be inhaled (breathed in) by your baby causing irritation of the lungs.

Persistent diaper rash may mean that an infection is present. Make an appointment with your baby's doctor so that he can examine the rash. The doctor may advise you to do something different or give another type of medicine.

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Cloth vs. disposable diapers

Doctors agree that the only children who never have a diaper rash are those who never wear diapers. Children kept in cloth diapers seem as likely to develop diaper rash as those kept in disposable diapers. If you use cloth diapers, use a diaper service or wash them in a gentle detergent as suggested above. If you choose disposables, remember that they need to be changed as frequently as cloth diapers, even though it is more difficult to tell when they are wet.

For more information contact Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health at (336) 641-7777 or www.myguilford.com