

Health Facts

Emergency Department

Nappy rash

What causes nappy rash?

The most common cause of nappy rash in babies is irritation. Constant moisture and rubbing cause damage to the skin.

Moisture from urine (wee) and faeces (poo)

- This 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 cloth nappies.

Nappy rash is made worse by:

- Diarrhea
- Not changing the nappy often enough
- Plastic pants cause the skin to sweat beneath

Signs and Symptoms

- Skin looks red and raw or may look red and spotty
- Skin area can be sore or itchy when the area is wiped
- Your baby may be unsettled or irritable

How to prevent nappy rash

- Change nappies as soon as possible after they become wet or soiled and preferably once during the night
- Clean the nappy area with cotton wool or cloths dampened with luke warm water; some baby wipes can irritate the skin
- Let your baby have some nappy free time each day
- 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 nappy area e.g. zinc and castor oil, nappy paste, soft paraffin
- Try good quality disposable nappies as these allow the moisture to be absorbed quickly keeping the skin dry

When to seek medical attention

- If the rash persists for more than a few days after using protective creams and ointments. It may mean that there is an underlying skin infection present such as thrush or bacterial infection. Thrush is a fungal infection which thrives in warm, moist areas. The doctor will usually prescribe a cream to treat the infection.

Health Facts

- 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.
- If you have any other concerns take your child to the GP or Emergency Department.

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