

How to prevent and manage nappy rash

Prepared by Dr Gayle Fischer, Visiting Medical Officer in Dermatology at Royal North Shore Hospital, St Leonards, NSW.

Nappy rash is one of the most common dermatological conditions seen in babies. However, by following some simple advice about the use of nappies, good skin care practices and treatment with mild corticosteroid and antifungal creams, symptoms can be treated and recurrences prevented.

Prevention

Nappy rash results from your baby's skin being kept too hot and damp by the nappy. An easy way to prevent this is to ensure you use good-quality disposable nappies, which keep the skin cooler and drier (Figure 1).

If you prefer to use cloth nappies, the following advice should be considered.

- Change the nappy every two hours.
- Do not use plastic overpants.
- Avoid double nappies.
- Do not use nappy liners.
- Machine wash and rinse the nappies in hot water.
- Tumble dry the nappies.

Changing nappies often can be very difficult overnight or when away from home. Consider using disposable nappies in these situations. Always change the nappy as soon as it is soiled with faeces. Long contact with faeces is irritating to a baby's skin.

Treatment

If your baby has developed nappy rash, follow this advice to treat it.

- Discard all powders and creams other than the ones recommended by your doctor. Use a bland, nonperfumed emollient (moisturising) cream, such as sorbolene cream, on your baby's skin at every nappy change (Figure 2).
- Do not use soap or bubble bath when bathing your baby.
- Avoid commercial wet wipes. Instead use a damp washer with soap-free cleanser.
- Change nappies as soon as they become wet or soiled.
- Apply hydrocortisone 1% ointment and an antifungal cream, as prescribed by your GP, or a hydrocortisone-antifungal mixture, three times a day.
- Do not be concerned that the hydrocortisone is too strong for your baby or is likely to thin the skin. This sort of cortisone is very safe.

Once the skin has recovered you can stop using the hydrocortisone and antifungal creams, but continue to do all the other things above or the rash may come back.

Nappy rash tends to recur. If this happens, just use the hydrocortisone and antifungal creams again. Do not use stronger corticosteroid creams, ointments or lotions. If the rash does not improve, see your doctor.

Some babies never have completely normal skin until they are out of nappies, both day and night. Aim for comfort rather than a perfect appearance. MT

This handout provides information about how to manage nappy rash and prevent any further episodes.



© ISTOCKPHOTO/NATHAN MAXFIELD. Model used for illustrative purpose only.

Figure 1. Change the nappy every two hours.



PHOTOLIBRARY

Figure 2. Use a nonperfumed moisturising cream at every nappy change.



COPY FOR YOUR PATIENTS

Doctors may photocopy these pages for distribution to patients. Written permission is necessary for all other uses.

© MedicineToday 2010

This MedicineToday handout is provided only for general information purposes. The information may not apply to everyone and the handout is not a substitute for professional medical care and advice. Please discuss the information with your doctor.