Diaper Rash

A red, blotchy bottom is the last thing a parent wants to see but most babies experience diaper rash. It's common in babies, particularly between ages 9–12 months, and compels more than a million healthcare provider visits every year. Care advice for your baby's skin from nurses at **Health4Mom.org** can guide you in noticing and treating diaper rash, even if your baby is born prematurely.

Your baby's skin develops throughout pregnancy, particularly in the last weeks before baby is born. At birth, your baby's skin is thinner than yours. It will continue to thicken and change through her 1st birthday. Babies born early may need up to 9 more weeks after birth for their skin to fully work as a barrier, retaining moisture so they stay warm and hydrated.

Babies born premature or hospitalized in neonatal care units experience more diaper rash than full-term infants. Ask your nurses about gentle skin cleansing and tips for preventing and treating diaper rash if your baby was born premature.

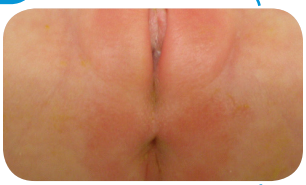
Diaper rash is seldom serious. With care, most diaper rash clears within 3–4 days. Left untreated it can be increasingly painful, leading to skin breakdown and sometimes skin infections.

HOW DIAPER RASH DEVELOPS

- Chafing from the diaper
- Irritation from urine or stool
- Skin may appear red or blotchy; time to intervene!
- Left untreated, scattered red bumps, blisters or open sores may form
- Bacterial or yeast infections can set in and require medical treatment

3 TYPES OF DIAPER RASH

- **Chafing dermatitis:** baby's diaper irritates her skin, often around the legs or bottom.
- **Irritant contact dermatitis:** baby's skin reacts to urine or stool, or sometimes to ingredients in products you're using on her skin or clothes, such as alcohol, dyes or perfumes. Even baby-specific products can cause reactions in some infants.
- **Diaper candidiasis (yeast infection):** appears as a bright red rash with pinpoint bumps that may spread to the creases of the diaper area, and it may develop yellow blister-like bumps. This type of rash requires treatment; see your baby's healthcare provider.



Diaper rash is less common in breastfed babies. Breastmilk lowers the pH of baby's stool so it's less irritating to her skin

PREVENT DIAPER RASH

Keep baby's skin as clean and dry as possible. See your baby's healthcare provider if a red diaper rash appears swollen or has red bumps or raised areas.

- **Change baby's diaper** as soon as it's wet or soiled.
- **Gently clean baby's diaper area** with warm water and a soft cloth or a diaper wipe without fragrances or other additives. Pat and wipe softly as you clean; avoid rubbing baby's skin.
- **Allow baby's skin to air dry** before re-diapering. If skin is slightly red, apply a thick layer of petroleum jelly at each diaper change until the rash is gone.
- **If skin is bright red**, apply a thick layer of zinc oxide-based diaper cream at each diaper change until the rash is gone.
- **Leave any barrier cream** that remains from the last diapering in place. Simply clean away any urine or stool, pat or air dry baby's skin, and apply more cream until the rash is gone.

Find more tips & advice in the newborn skin care zone at Health4Mom.org

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Diaper To Prevent Diaper Rash

Diapering today is nothing like when your parent changed you. Sure, you're still diapering for baby's urine and stool until potty training happens, but with modern disposable diapers and diaper inserts and their breathable cloth-like outer wrappers, super-absorbent cores, wetness meters and emollients to protect baby's skin, you're managing a highly technological process!

It's no wonder some experts no longer recommend cloth diapers, as they can hold moisture against baby's skin. Your nurses have the expertise and clinical skills to guide you in diapering your baby to help prevent diaper rash. If you choose cloth diapers, specifically ask your nurses how to prevent diaper rash.

CHOOSE BABY BOTTOM-FRIENDLY DIAPERS

Your baby will go through several thousand diapers from birth until he's potty trained. The most popular diapers are disposable or washable wrappers that hold disposable inserts designed to wick moisture away from baby's skin. Look for the following features:

- **Soft, breathable outer shell or cover**
- **Absorbent core** to wick moisture
- **Foldable waist or notched top** to keep newborn diapers away from baby's umbilical area
- **Stretchy fabric or gathers** at the waist, sides and legs for best fit (read *leakproof!*)
- **Sensitive skin-friendly**, like fragrance-free or chlorine-free
- **Easy adjustable fasteners**

Promote Skin Health at Every Diaper Change

- **Always wash your hands before** and after every diaper change

- **Change baby's diaper as soon as it's soiled** and at least every 1–3 hours during the day
- **Change baby's diaper at least once during the night** to prevent diaper rash and promote healing when diaper rash is present

- **Gently wipe, swipe or pat with warm water** and a soft cloth or a skin-friendly wipe; never rub baby's skin during a diaper change

- **Wipe from front to back** as you cleanse baby's genital area

- **Apply petroleum jelly if baby's bottom appears slightly red** or zinc oxide-based diaper cream in the presence of rash at each change until baby is rash-free

- **Use petroleum jelly or rash cream to prevent diaper rash** if it's frequent with your baby

- **Ask nurses to show you gentle touch and cleansing techniques** especially if your baby was born premature

- **Avoid using baby or talcum powder,** which can irritate baby's skin and lungs

Gently clean baby's diaper area to promote healthy skin

ABCDEs OF PREVENTING DIAPER RASH

AIR	**Allow baby's skin to air dry** for as long as possible between changes and regularly give baby some diaper-free time.
BARRIER	**Zinc-oxide diaper cream and petroleum jelly provide a barrier** between the diaper and urine or stool while your baby's damaged skin heals. Use at every diaper change in infants who develop rash frequently.
CLEANSE	**Always wipe gently and pat when cleaning baby's diaper area**—never rub while cleansing baby's skin. Irritant-free wipes may actually be more effective than warm water when cleaning stool.
DIAPER	**Disposable diapers or wrappers with absorbent inserts are recommended** to help prevent rash.
EDUCATION	**Take note when and how your baby experiences diaper rash** and ask your nurses for their advice on preventing diaper rash for your baby.

Nurses share advice on keeping baby clean and dry in the newborn skin care zone at Health4Mom.org

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