

Diaper Rash

Diaper rash describes a condition in which skin at the diaper area becomes red and inflamed.

CAUSES

Diaper rash has a number of causes. They include:

- Irritation. The diaper area may become irritated after contact with urine or stool. The diaper area is more susceptible to irritation if the area is often wet or if diapers are not changed for a long periods of time. Irritation may also result from diapers that are too tight or from soaps or baby wipes, if the skin is sensitive.
- Yeast or bacterial infection. An infection may develop if the diaper area is often moist. Yeast and bacteria thrive in warm, moist areas. A yeast infection is more likely to occur if your child or a nursing mother takes antibiotics. Antibiotics may kill the bacteria that prevent yeast infections from occurring.

RISK FACTORS

Having diarrhea or taking antibiotics may make diaper rash more likely to occur.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Skin at the diaper area may:

- Itch or scale.
- Be red or have red patches or bumps around a larger red area of skin.
- Be tender to the touch. Your child may behave differently than he or she usually does when the diaper area is cleaned.

Typically, affected areas include the lower part of the abdomen (below the belly button), the buttocks, the genital area, and the upper leg.

DIAGNOSIS

Diaper rash is diagnosed with a physical exam. Sometimes a skin sample (*skin biopsy*) is taken to confirm the diagnosis. The type of rash and its cause can be determined based on how the rash looks and the results of the skin biopsy.

TREATMENT

Diaper rash is treated by keeping the diaper area clean and dry. Treatment may also involve:

- Leaving your child's diaper off for brief periods of time to air out the skin.
- Applying a treatment ointment, paste, or cream to the affected area. The type of ointment, paste, or cream depends on the cause of the diaper rash. For example, diaper rash caused by a yeast infection is treated with a cream or ointment that kills yeast germs.
- Applying a skin barrier ointment or paste to irritated areas with every diaper change. This can help prevent irritation from occurring or getting worse. Powders should not be used because they can easily become moist and make the irritation worse.

Diaper rash usually goes away within 2–3 days of treatment.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Change your child's diaper soon after your child wets or soils it.
- Use absorbent diapers to keep the diaper area dryer.
- Wash the diaper area with warm water after each diaper change. Allow the skin to air dry or use a soft cloth to dry the area thoroughly. Make sure no soap remains on the skin.
- If you use soap on your child's diaper area, use one that is fragrance free.
- Leave your child's diaper off as directed by your health care provider.
- Keep the front of diapers off whenever possible to allow the skin to dry.
- **Do not** use scented baby wipes or those that contain alcohol.
- Only apply an ointment or cream to the diaper area as directed by your health care provider.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The rash has not improved within 2–3 days of treatment.
- The rash has not improved and your child has a fever.
- Your child who is older than 3 months has a fever.
- The rash gets worse or is spreading.
- There is pus coming from the rash.
- Sores develop on the rash.
- White patches appear in the mouth.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

Your child who is younger than 3 months has a fever.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.