|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |

# Skin Care: Information for Parents

Your baby’s nurses will look at your baby’s skin to make sure it is not broken or red. Your baby has very fragile skin that has to be touched gently. As your baby gets older, his or her skin will not be as fragile. Talk with your baby’s nurses about ways to protect your baby’s skin while moving him or her.

Remember to always wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds before touching your baby. You should scrub your hands very well while washing them and clean underneath your fingernails. Also, clean between each of your fingers and the top of your hands. You also should wash your hands after changing your baby’s diaper and before you make your baby’s bottle.

Washing your hands will help prevent your baby from getting an infection. Others caring for your baby will need to do this, too.

Your baby’s nurses will tell you about the different things that they will do to or use on your baby’s skin. The nurses will show you how to help take care of your baby’s skin until you go home.

## Bathing

You may see your baby’s nurses clean the bathtub before and after a bath. This is done to help prevent infection. The soap used on your baby should be fragrance-free to help protect his or her skin. You may find that your baby’s nurses use only water when giving your baby a bath. This is because your baby was born early, and soap is not needed right now. Later on, your baby will get a bath with soap. You do not need to give your baby a bath more than once every few days. By not bathing your baby every day, you are helping to keep his or her fragile skin safe and not dried out.

## Vernix

Your baby may have a white, cheesy covering on his or her skin called vernix. This is normal and is a natural covering to keep your baby’s skin moist and free from infection. Scrubbing this covering off can hurt your baby’s

fragile skin. Instead, the covering is left in place until it comes off by itself.

## Cord Care

After your baby is born, the umbilical cord is clamped and cut, leaving a stump. If it becomes dirty, this stump can be cleaned with water and dried well. It is not necessary to use alcohol wipes to clean the cord. The best way to keep your baby’s cord free from infection is to make sure that it does not get dirty from your baby’s diaper. You should fold the front of your baby’s diaper down when changing him or her to make sure the stump does not get wet. You should look at the cord daily to make sure it is not red or hot or has any drainage. These are signs of infection, and you should tell your baby’s provider or nurses if you see them.

## Cream to Protect Your Baby’s Skin

The nurses may put a clear cream on your baby’s skin, which will help keep it from becoming too dry. When your baby’s skin is too dry, it can crack more easily. Talk with your baby’s nurse or medical provider about creams or lotions that can be used on your baby’s skin. If you apply the clear cream to your baby’s skin, make sure the container does not get dirty because this can raise the risk of a skin infection.

## Water Loss

Your baby’s skin is very thin and fragile. Because of this, your baby’s skin can dry out very easily. Depending on how early your baby was born, he or she may have been wrapped in a plastic bag from the shoulders down right after being born. This helps keep the baby warm and his or her skin moist. Remember that your baby can get cold very easily. The plastic bag also will help prevent that. Your baby also might have been placed into an *isolette*, which is a special “house” that keeps your baby warm and lets the nurses keep track of your baby’s temperature. Sometimes when your baby is in the isolette, the nurses will keep the air humid inside of it, which helps keep your baby warm and his or her skin moist.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |

## Keeping Your Baby Free from Infection

Your baby may need to have his or her skin cleaned with a special cleansing product before certain procedures are performed. This helps protect your baby from an infection. Feel free to ask any questions about the special cleansing products or the procedures being performed.

## Tape

Since your baby has very fragile skin you may see your baby’s nurses use different kinds of tape on your baby. The nurses may put a protective piece of tape on your baby’s skin and then put another kind of tape on top of that. This helps keep your baby’s skin intact. When the nurses remove the tape, they will do it slowly and may use water to keep your baby’s skin from breaking.

Your baby’s nurses also may leave the tape in place even though your baby may not need it anymore. This is because the nurses are waiting for the tape to come off by itself. This will help keep your baby’s fragile skin intact and protect your baby from getting an infection.

## For Baby Boys

You may or may not decide to have your baby boy circumcised. This procedure is used to remove skin toward the tip of the penis. Caring for your son differs based on whether or not you choose to have your son circumcised.

For a natural penis, you should not pull the skin down to clean around your baby’s penis. This can cause your baby’s skin to tear. Instead, leave the skin in place and gently clean around the penis if needed.

For circumcised boys, the tip of the penis may seem raw or yellowish. When gauze is used, it should be changed

with each new diaper to reduce the risk of infection. Use petroleum jelly to keep the gauze from sticking to the diaper. Sometimes a plastic ring is used for circumcision. This should drop off within 5–8 days. It may be recommended that you use petroleum jelly on the tip of the penis with either procedure to keep the foreskin lubricated; be sure to follow the instructions from the hospital. The penis should be fully healed about 7–10 days after circumcision.

## Diaper Rash

Diaper rash is when your baby has redness and irritation around his or her buttocks. To prevent a diaper rash, frequently change your baby’s diaper, especially after they poop. To care for a diaper rash, clean the area with soft cloths and water. You also can clean the area with diaper wipes that are chemical-free. Your baby also may have a special cream that should be applied each time the diaper is changed. Sometimes, your nurses will tell you not to wipe off all of the cream, but to only gently wipe around the buttocks. This will keep your baby’s skin intact and allow it to heal.

## Other Skin Information

Depending on how early your baby was born, you may see your baby’s nurses use special products to keep your baby’s skin from tearing, including placing special pads underneath your baby or placing clear coverings on your baby’s knees or elbows. Ask your baby’s nurses about ways you can help keep your baby’s skin from tearing.