

CARING FOR YOUR BABY WITH DIAPER RASH

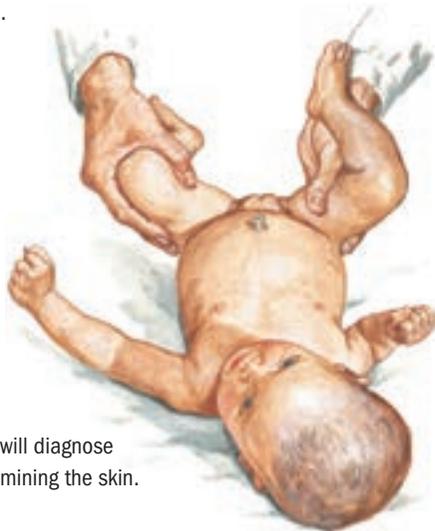


Most babies will have diaper rash at least once.

F. Netter
M.D.



The cause can be irritating substances, yeast, or bacteria trapped against the baby's skin by the diaper. Synthetic absorbent materials in disposable diapers or germ-killing rinses can also cause irritation. The rash can be uncomfortable or painful.



Your health care provider will diagnose diaper rash simply by examining the skin.

What Is Diaper Rash?

Diaper rash, or diaper dermatitis, is a skin irritation underneath the area covered by a diaper. It affects most babies at least once.

What Causes Diaper Rash?

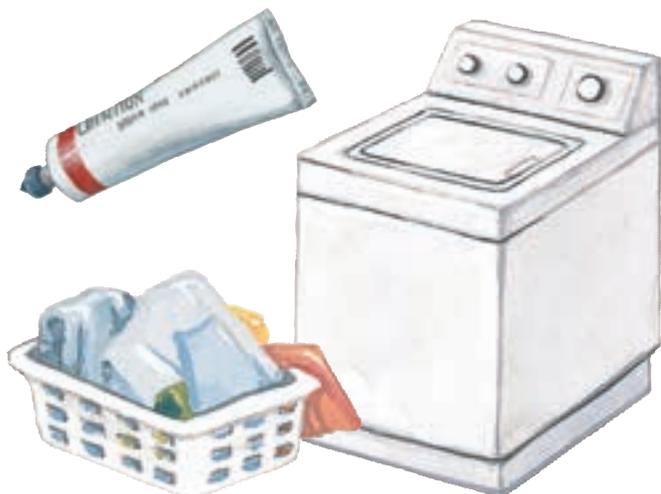
The cause can be irritating substances, yeast, or bacteria trapped against the baby's skin by the diaper. Materials such as synthetic absorbents in disposable diapers and germ-killing rinses can also cause irritation. Commercial diaper wipes are another source of irritation.

What Are the Symptoms of Diaper Rash?

Redness and irritation in the diaper area often begin with faint, raised, pink spots, which seem to get larger and soon cover the diaper area if untreated. In the worst cases, skin may look red and begin to peel. Skin folds may become raw. Babies are usually fretful and fussy and cry, especially after urinating or moving the bowels. Diaper rash doesn't usually cause a fever.

How Is Diaper Rash Diagnosed?

The health care provider will make a diagnosis by examining the skin.



Topical creams and frequent diaper changes usually cure and prevent diaper rash. Also, switching disposable diaper brands or rinsing cloth diapers twice to remove an irritating rinse may solve the problem.



Sometimes a baby's skin is extra sensitive to one brand of diaper or wipes. Use warm water instead of wipes at least until the rash clears. Switch brands if cream and frequent changes don't help.

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How Is Diaper Rash Treated?

Treatment includes use of creams and ointments on the skin (topical) and frequent diaper changes. If irritation from urine is the main problem, a simple ointment containing zinc oxide will often give relief. It should be applied at each diaper change, after the diaper area is gently cleaned with lukewarm water and patted dry.

If the rash lasts even with these treatments, changing the type of diaper may help. Some babies are sensitive to chemicals in cloth diaper rinses, and others are irritated by synthetic materials in disposable diapers. Switching disposable brands or rinsing cloth diapers twice may solve the problem.

If yeast (*Candida*) caused the rash, the health care provider may prescribe an ointment containing nystatin or clotrimazole. This kind of rash, perhaps with yeast infection in the mouth (thrush), often occurs after antibiotic treatment for ear infections. The health care provider may also prescribe nystatin drops for the thrush.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Diaper Rash:

- ✓ **DO** your best to prevent diaper rash by keeping your baby's diaper area as dry as possible.
- ✓ **DO** leave the skin open to fresh air as much as possible.
- ✓ **DO** diaper loosely, and change baby frequently.
- ✓ **DO** use lukewarm water with a soft washcloth for cleaning the diaper area after the baby urinates. A small amount of baby bath can be used on the washcloth for cleaning after bowel movements.
- ✓ **DO** apply zinc oxide or antiyeast ointment at each diaper change.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if the baby develops a fever.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if the rash worsens despite home treatment or if it goes beyond the diaper area.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your baby refuses breast or bottle or if vomiting or diarrhea occurs.
- ⊗ **DON'T** wait for a health care provider visit to begin treating diaper rash. If the diaper area looks red, begin frequent (hourly) diaper checks right away, and change the diaper if you note dampness.
- ⊗ **DON'T** use commercial diaper wipes because they'll worsen the rash.
- ⊗ **DON'T** use over-the-counter antibacterial ointments unless your health care provider recommends them. These can cause irritation and rash themselves and are rarely needed.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- American Academy of Dermatology
Tel: (866) 503-SKIN (7546)
Website: <http://www.aad.org>