



Newborn And Baby Skin Care

Skin cleansing

Newborn babies can enjoy a gentle bath or cleansing of the skin for 5 to 10 minutes once a day. Use slightly warm tap water (ideal temperature between 36°C to 40°C) and a gentle soap-free cleanser. The use of harsh soaps is not recommended for newborn or infant skin.

After bathing, pat the baby's skin dry with a soft towel before dressing. In our warm climate, one layer of light cotton clothing including mittens and booties, is sufficient.

Use of moisturisers

In newborns with a family history of allergic conditions such as eczema, asthma or allergic rhinitis, the application of moisturisers can prevent atopic dermatitis (eczema).

Moisturisers help to protect your baby's skin and enhance its maturation and repair. You should apply moisturisers after bath for the best effect, on all your baby's skin surfaces including the face.

Choose moisturisers that do not contain fragrances, dyes and preservatives. Moisturisers that mimic the natural skin oils, especially those containing ceramides have been shown to help form a healthy and functional skin barrier in babies.

What is the difference between the skin of my infant and the skin of older children and adults?

A newborn baby's skin differs from the skin of older children and adults, both in structure and function.

When a baby is just born, he may be covered in a layer of white, creamy substance known as vernix caseosa. This natural substance provides a waterproof layer to protect a baby's skin when he is still in the womb. At birth, it acts as a lubricant and is involved in heat and water regulation. It also protects from bacteria and aids in wound healing during the birth process, until it is gently removed at the first few baths.

Newborn skin is thinner and more easily damaged by strong and irritating skin products. Overuse of powders or medicated oils can lead to dry, irritated skin and contribute to eczema in your baby. Be careful also to always follow your doctor's instructions when applying medicated creams or ointments.

In addition, newborn skin contains less sweat glands which are also less developed than older children or adults, predisposing to overheating. Excessive swaddling may lead to development of heat rash, especially on the back.

Care of the umbilical cord

The umbilical cord usually separates from the baby 7 to 10 days after birth. Before that, it is important to keep the area clean by gently cleansing with cool, boiled water or a soap-free cleanser. Antiseptic solutions are not required and can lead to irritation of the skin if used excessively. The cord clamp can be left in place until the cord separates. Watch out for signs of infection such as redness, offensive smell and yellowish discharge. Bring your baby to the doctor or paediatrician if there are signs of infection.



Care of the nappy area

Diapers should be changed frequently, usually every 3 to 4 hours or when soiled. Disposable diapers are recommended. As excessive use of wet wipes may cause irritation to the diaper area, you can use water or soap-free cleansers with cotton wool instead. A thick barrier cream should be applied at each diaper change. The use of talcum powder at the diaper area is not recommended.

Nappy rash is a very common problem. If you have practised the above measures but the rash is persistent, especially if there is worsening redness or flaking, do bring your baby to see a doctor.

Common skin rash in newborns (*erythema toxicum neonatorum*)

It is common for newborns to develop a skin rash within the first week of life, affecting the face, body and limbs. It appears as red blotches of varying sizes, small red bumps and sometimes small yellowish bumps. It usually lasts for a few days and disappears on its own. If the baby is otherwise well, no treatment is required.

Miliaria (heat rash)

Heat rash is a common condition seen in our warm climate and arises due to blockage of the baby's immature sweat ducts. It appears as tiny red bumps over the covered areas like the back, neck, groin and armpit. If your baby develops heat rash, remove him from the warm environment, and avoid dressing him in thick clothing or swaddling him excessively.

Seborrhœic dermatitis (cradle cap)

This is a common skin condition that usually occurs in babies with a family history of eczema and allergies. It usually starts after 2 to 3 weeks of life and appears as a yellowish oily, scaly rash on the scalp (cradle cap), face, neck, armpits and groin. Sometimes, it may be associated with baby acne on the face. It can recur in the first few months of life. Some babies go on to develop eczema. Treatment includes the use of olive oil, anti-fungal shampoos, mild topical steroid creams, or lotions and moisturisers.

Source: KK Women's and Children's Hospital

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