

# Diaper Rash

Diaper rash is a very common problem. It is caused by irritation in the diaper area and can be very uncomfortable for your baby. Diaper rash usually improves with simple treatments, but it sometimes can be difficult to get rid of. The irritated skin can become infected, most often with *Candida* yeast. If a yeast infection occurs, specific treatment is needed.

## What is diaper rash?

Diaper rash is caused by irritation of the skin in the diaper area. It is sometimes called “diaper dermatitis.”

The skin becomes red and sore. The rash can get worse if it isn't taken care of properly, and it can become quite painful for your baby. Infection can occur, including infection with the yeast *Candida*.

In most cases, diaper rash gets better if you keep the area as clean as possible, including frequent diaper changes, and apply an ointment to protect the skin. If the rash becomes large or severe, call our office.

## What does it look like?

- The skin in the diaper area looks red and scaly, sometimes with scattered small bumps.
- You may notice small cracks, rubbed areas, thickening, or raw areas of the skin.
- The rash can be painful, causing fussiness and crying in your infant.
- If yeast infection occurs, the rash may become very red with well-outlined borders. Scattered bumps or pimples may appear in the skin near the borders. The rash may spread to cover the entire diaper area or beyond.

## What causes diaper rash?

- Diaper rash is caused by irritation of the skin. The most important factor is the length of time the skin stays wet and in contact with urine and stool (bowel movements).
- Other irritants can also contribute to a rash in the diaper area, such as soaps and baby products.
- The rash may become infected with germs, such as *Candida* yeast. Warmth and wetness inside the diaper encourage germs to grow.
- Every baby's skin is different; some babies just get diaper rash more often than others. Changing diapers frequently can help to prevent diaper rash.

## What are some possible complications of diaper rash?

- Serious complications are rare. However, diaper rash can be painful for your baby, interfering with sleep and play time.
- Yeast infection may occur. Though this causes a red and well-outlined rash, it is usually easy to treat.
- Diaper rash may become severe, with very raw sores that may take a couple weeks to heal.
- Some babies have repeated problems with diaper rash. Even with treatment, the rash seems to keep coming back.

## What increases your baby's risk of diaper rash?

- Going too long between diaper changes.
- Using soaps or other products that irritate the skin.

## Can diaper rash be prevented?

Frequent diaper changes, careful cleaning of the area, routinely using a protective ointment (like vaseline), and avoiding soaps or other skin irritants may help prevent these rashes.

## How is diaper rash treated?

- Change your baby's diaper as soon as possible every time it's wet or dirty.
- Clean the area carefully. A clean cloth or towel with fresh water is best for cleaning; avoid using diaper wipes containing perfumes or alcohol. Be sure to clean all parts of your baby's genitals. Clean inside the deep folds in the diaper area.
- Super-absorbent disposable diapers help keep urine and stool away from the skin.
- Apply a diaper rash ointment such as petroleum jelly (Vaseline) or products containing zinc oxide (for example, Desitin). These products can help keep moisture away from the skin. Put on a light layer right after cleaning and drying the diaper area.
- If the rash takes a long time to heal or is severe, it may be a good idea to visit your doctor. He or she can check to see if the rash has become infected with yeast (*Candida*) or other germs or if some other type of skin condition is present.

- If yeast infection occurs, a prescription ointment will be recommended. Apply to the rash with each diaper change (four times per day) for a week or so.
- For a more severe rash, a weak hydrocortisone cream may be recommended. Apply a few times per day for a few days.
- Even with treatment, some babies have repeated problems with diaper rash. The same is true for diaper rash with infection, especially with *Candida*. However, diaper rash rarely causes serious problems.
- If your child is having frequent and/or severe diaper rash, call our office. The doctor may want to perform tests to see if there is some other problem that is causing the skin irritation.



### **When should I call your office?**

Call our office if diaper rash doesn't improve with treatments.