

[Return to Web version](#)

Diaper Rash

What does diaper rash look like?

Diaper rash usually causes mild redness and scaling where the diaper touches your baby's skin. In bad cases, the rash can cause pimples, blisters and other sores on your baby's buttocks, thighs or genital area. If the rash gets infected, it may become bright red and the skin may get swollen. Small red patches or spots may spread beyond the main part of the rash, even outside the diaper area.



[Return to top](#)

What causes diaper rash?

Most diaper rashes are caused by skin irritation. Irritation can be caused by diapers that rub against the skin or fit too tightly. Irritation can also occur if your baby is left in a wet or dirty diaper for a long period of time. Your baby's skin can also be irritated by the soap used to wash cloth diapers, or by some brands of disposable diapers or baby wipes.

Plastic pants that fit over diapers raise the temperature and moisture in the diaper area. Heat and moisture make it easier for diaper rash to start and for germs to grow.

Diaper rash can also develop while the baby is on antibiotics (or if the mother is on antibiotics while breastfeeding).

[Return to top](#)

How can I prevent and treat diaper rashes?

The key to preventing and treating diaper rash is to keep your baby's diaper area clean, cool and dry.

Change your baby's diaper often, and let him or her go without a diaper when possible to let the air dry his or her skin.

Try placing your baby on an open cloth diaper during nap time. Check the diaper shortly after your baby falls asleep and replace it if it's wet. Babies often urinate right after falling asleep.

See the box below for tips on preventing and treating diaper rash. If these things don't work, talk to your doctor.

Don't use creams that contain boric acid, camphor, phenol, methyl salicylate or compound of benzoin tincture. These things can be harmful.

[Return to top](#)

Tips on preventing and treating diaper rash

- Check your baby's diaper often and change it as soon as it's wet or soiled.
- Carefully clean your baby's bottom between diaper changes. Use plain warm (not hot) water with or without a very mild soap.
- Allow your baby's skin to dry completely before putting on another diaper.
- Avoid baby wipes and soaps that are scented. The alcohol or fragrance can make skin irritation worse.
- Use products that contain zinc oxide ointment (such as Desitin Ointment) or petroleum (such as Vaseline) to protect your baby's skin from moisture.
- Avoid using plastic pants or diapers with plastic edges.
- After bathing, pat your baby's bottom dry with a towel rather than scrubbing it. Scrubbing can irritate your baby's sensitive skin.
- If diaper rash persists, change the type of wipes, diapers or soap you're using.

[Return to top](#)

What if my baby has an infection?

If your baby also has an infection with the rash, your doctor might give you a prescription for a special antifungal cream to use on your baby's rash.

[Return to top](#)

What about powder?

Doctors don't recommend using talcum powder or cornstarch. Talcum powder can get in your baby's lungs. Cornstarch may make a diaper rash caused by a yeast infection worse.

[Return to top](#)

Should I use cloth or disposable diapers?

The choice is up to you. Some research suggests that because disposable diapers are more absorbent they keep babies drier.

If you use cloth diapers and wash them at home, boil them for 15 minutes on the stove after washing them to kill germs and remove soap that could irritate your baby's skin.

But remember that the most important thing about diapers is to change them often.

[Return to top](#)

Call your doctor if:

- The diaper rash occurs in the first 6 weeks of life
- Pimples and small ulcers form
- Your baby has a fever

- Your baby loses weight or isn't eating as well as usual
- Large bumps or nodules appear
- The rash spreads to other areas, such as the arms, face or scalp
- The rash doesn't get better after trying the tips on treating diaper rash for 1 week

[Return to top](#)

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