



Patient Information

The Bottom Line on Diaper Rash

Almost every child who wears diapers will experience diaper rash — or diaper dermatitis — at some time. The red, often shiny skin condition commonly appears in infants ages 9 to 12 months, but it can appear earlier, and it can persist until the child stops wearing diapers.

Diaper rash is caused by skin contact with moisture, bacteria and ammonia from urine and feces trapped in diapers — especially in diapers covered by plastic pants, which can “superheat” the area. Diaper rash can be made worse by too-tight diapers rubbing against the skin.

Once the skin is irritated, it can become infected with yeast and bacteria, making diaper rash worse. Antibiotics for unrelated conditions can cause yeast to flourish in the diaper area.

Symptoms of Diaper Rash

Diaper rashes can look different depending on the cause of the rash, but there are some typical symptoms. These rashes should be treated by your nurse practitioner if they don't clear up within 3 days:

- Contact diaper dermatitis is usually red and shiny and appears most often on the buttocks, but not in skin folds. It can spread beyond the diaper area to the thighs and stomach.
- Candida diaper dermatitis usually appears as shiny, deep-red, oval lesions. The lesions may be filled with pus and have raised borders. Candida yeast also causes thrush in a baby's mouth.
- Seborrheic diaper dermatitis usually appears as pink or yellowish scales on the baby's buttocks and groin and in skin folds. Seborrhea can appear on other parts of the body as well, typically on the face, scalp and neck.

Contact your nurse practitioner if you see any of the following symptoms:

- Large blisters, sores, pimples, boils or crusts
- A solid, bright red rash that looks raw or bleeds
- Spreading beyond the diaper area

Treatment for Diaper Rash

Your nurse practitioner can determine the cause of your child's diaper rash and prescribe oral medication or a medicated diaper cream for an infection. Choice of treatment will depend on your child's age, the type and severity of the diaper rash, and your child's medical history.

For common diaper rash caused by simple irritation:

- Avoid using soap or baby wipes, which can sting sensitive skin.
- Avoid scrubbing skin with washcloth or towel.
- Wash the baby's bottom at changing time with a warm water bath.
- Pat the skin dry, and then let the area air dry.
- Try an over-the-counter diaper ointment that provides a moisture barrier.
- Avoid airtight pants and diapers.
- Leave diapers off for a few days.

Preventing Diaper Rash

The best treatment for diaper rash is prevention — and the best prevention is frequent and proper diapering:

- Change diapers as soon as possible after the diaper is soiled.
- Keep the diaper area scrupulously clean.
- Clean a newborn's bottom with tepid water on a cotton ball or washcloth. You can use alcohol-free baby wipes after the baby's first month or two.
- Let the baby's bottom air dry for a while before diapering, and leave diapers off as often as possible.
- Let the baby sleep on an open, clean diaper.

Cloth diapers and disposable diapers are equally likely to contribute to diaper rash.

To limit irritation from cloth diapers, wash them in a mild detergent and bleach, and rinse thoroughly. Some of the materials in disposable diapers can cause irritation in some children. Try switching brands if your child is affected.

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Additional Notes:
