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Newborn Skin Care (Normal)

Bathing

You may bathe your baby daily, but for the first few months, 2 or 3 times a week is often enough for a full bath. Clean your baby's drools and spills as they happen and keep the face, hands and diaper area clean.

Keep the bath water level below the navel or give sponge baths until a few days after the navel cord has fallen off. Submerging the cord could cause infection or interfere with its drying out and falling off. Getting the cord a little wet doesn't matter.

Use tap water without any soap or with a nondrying soap such as Dove. Don't forget to wash the face; otherwise, chemicals from milk and food can build up and cause an irritated rash. Also rinse off the eyelids with water.

Don't forget to wash the genital area. However, when you wash the inside of the female genital area (the vulva), never use soap. Rinse the area with plain water and wipe from front to back to prevent irritation. This practice and the avoidance of any bubble baths before puberty may prevent many urinary tract infections and vaginal irritations. At the end of the bath, rinse your baby well; soap residue can be irritating.

Changing Diapers

After you remove a wet diaper, just rinse your baby's bottom off with a wet washcloth. After soiled diapers, rinse the bottom under running warm water or in a basin of warm water. After you clean the rear, cleanse the genital area by wiping front to back with a wet cloth. If you have a boy, carefully clean the scrotum. If you have a girl, carefully clean the creases of the vaginal lips (labia).

Shampoo

Wash your baby's hair once or twice a week with a special baby shampoo that doesn't sting the eyes. Don't be concerned about hurting the anterior fontanelle (soft spot on the head). It is well protected.

Lotions, Ointments, and Powder

Newborn skin normally does not require any ointments or creams. Especially avoid putting any oil, ointment, or greasy substance on your baby's skin because this will almost always block the small sweat glands and lead to pimples or a heat rash. If the skin starts to become dry and cracked, use a baby lotion, hand lotion, or moisturizing cream twice a day.

Cornstarch powder can be helpful for preventing rashes in areas of friction. Avoid talcum powder because it can cause a serious chemical pneumonia if inhaled into the lungs.

Umbilical Cord

Try to keep the cord dry. Put rubbing alcohol on the base of the cord (where it attaches to the skin) twice a day (including after the bath) until 1 week after it falls off. Air exposure helps the cord stay dry and eventually fall off, so keep diapers folded down below the cord area. If you are using disposable diapers, you can cut out a wedge of diaper with a scissors so the cord is not covered.

Fingernails and Toenails

Cut the toenails straight across to prevent ingrown toenails. When you cut fingernails, round off the corners of the nails so your baby doesn't scratch himself/herself, or others.

Trim the nails once a week after a bath, when the nails are softened by the bath. Use clippers or special baby scissors. This job usually takes two people unless you do it while your child is asleep.