Diaper Rash

What is diaper rash?
Diaper rash is a common skin condition.

- It causes red and blotchy skin to form in the diaper area.
- It may have raised red spots or sores.
- It may have deep red in color and be painful and warm to touch.

What causes it?
There are many causes of diaper rash. Any one or more of these can cause diaper rash:

- **Irritation from urine and stool.** A rash may form after the skin has been exposed to urine or stool.
- **New foods.** New foods can change the look, consistency and frequency of stools. This can cause irritation to the skin in the diaper area. This is normally not a sign of a food allergy.
- **New products.** New disposable diapers, disposable wipes or detergents can cause a rash. Sometimes dye (colors) in disposable diapers can cause a rash.
- **Irritation from current products.** Disposable diapers or wipes or detergents that you’ve using for weeks or even months can cause a rash. Even though your child has not had a rash before with these products, a rash can develop after using them for a long period of time.
- **Rubbing or chafing.** Diaper rash may form if diapers fit too tight. Tight clothes that rub against the skin can also cause a rash.
- **Bacterial or yeast infection.** A skin infection can cause a rash. It can start in the creases of the skin in the diaper area, and then spread to surrounding skin.
- **Oral medicine (antibiotics).** Sometimes an oral medicine used to help fight an infection can cause diaper rash.

The cause of your child’s diaper rash may be different each time there is a new rash.

Who gets diaper rash?
Diaper rash is common in babies up to 15 months of age. However, diaper rash can form in children who still wear diapers or pull-ups. Diaper rash is less common in children who wear underwear.
How will it affect my child?
Diaper rash can be painful. Your child may cry or fuss more than normal when the area is touched with diaper changes or baths.

How is it treated?

At home

- Change your child’s diaper often:
  - Every time you change your child’s diaper, wash the whole diaper area. Gently wash with a washcloth wet with warm water. Be sure to clean in the skin creases.
  - Pat the skin dry or let the skin air-dry before putting on a clean diaper.
  - Don’t use baby wipes that have alcohol. They can make the rash worse.
- Use a barrier ointment or cream with each diaper change. Try Vaseline®, A & D Ointment®, Desitin®, Triple Paste®, or plain petroleum jelly or zinc oxide.
- If your child is sensitive to the disposable diaper you are using, try another brand.

If your child’s diaper rash does not get better within a few days after starting home treatment, a prescription medicine may be needed. Common medicines include:

- A steroid medicine that goes on the skin
- An antifungal medicine that goes on the skin.

Your child’s healthcare provider may do a bacterial culture of the rash. To do the culture, a cotton swab is rubbed on the skin to get a sample of the affected skin. This will help decide if the skin in the diaper area is infected and needs oral medicine.

**ALERT:** Call your child’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- A rash that:
  - Does not go away.
  - Gets worse after you followed the treatment directions.
  - Starts to bleed or has pus filled bumps.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

*This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.*