



Diaper Rash

Diaper rash is very common. There are several causes, and its treatment depends on what is causing it.

What is diaper rash?

Diaper rash is irritation of the skin in your child's diaper area. It is also known as diaper dermatitis. It is very common.

The diaper holds in moisture and keeps the area damp and warm. This can encourage the growth of bacteria and yeast, which can cause a rash. Pee (urine) and poop (stool) can irritate the skin, which can also cause a rash.

What causes diaper rash?

There are several different causes of diaper rash, including:

- **Irritation** from exposure to urine and stool is the most common cause of diaper rash.
- **Yeast**, called *Candida albicans*, naturally live in the diaper area on all children. Antibiotics, like those used to treat ear infections, can cause the yeast to overgrow.
- **Bacterial infections** can cause diaper rash and can require antibiotic treatment.
- **An allergy or sensitivity** to creams, ointments, wipes, soaps, or diapers can also cause a rash.

How is diaper rash treated?

How your child's diaper rash is treated depends on what is causing it.

- **Exposure to an irritant:** These rashes are treated by using creams and ointments containing zinc oxide to protect the skin and allow it to heal. There are many over-the-counter diaper creams with zinc oxide, but a basic zinc oxide ointment that does not have fragrance is a good choice.
- **Yeast:** Yeast infections are treated by using an antifungal cream, like nystatin or clotrimazole. Your child's healthcare provider can talk with you about what would be best for your child.
- **Bacteria:** Bacterial infections are treated by antibiotics prescribed by your child's healthcare provider. They might be taken by mouth (oral) or put on the skin (topical).
- **Allergy or sensitivity:** Your child's care provider may prescribe a mild steroid to be applied on to the affected area of the skin (topical steroid). It is also important to stop using the product to which your child is allergic.

How can I prevent diaper rash?

- Keep the diaper area as dry as possible. When changing the diaper, gently dry the area and keep the diaper off for a short period of time to allow your child's bottom to dry completely.

To Learn More

- Dermatology
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

- Use baby wipes sparingly or avoid them altogether. Using wipes too much can be irritating because of the friction on the skin. Try using baby wipes that do not have fragrances and only after bowel movements. You can also try rinsing your child off with warm water in the bath/sink or use cotton balls saturated with mineral oil to help gently remove stool from your child's bottom.
- Choose diapers that work best for your child. Disposable diapers are better at absorbing moisture and keeping it away from the skin. Disposable diapers also allow for the use of zinc oxide creams, which is often not allowed with cloth diapers because it makes them less absorbent. Rarely children can develop an allergy to diapers themselves. Try avoiding diapers that have dyes, fragrances or have been bleached.
- Avoid using baby powder because it can get in the lungs and cause breathing issues. It can also mix with urine and sweat to create an irritating paste.
- If your child has diaper rashes often, try applying petroleum jelly (like Vaseline) or a diaper cream with zinc oxide to the diaper area after each diaper change, even if there is no rash. This may help prevent diaper rash by forming a protective barrier between your child's skin and their urine and stool.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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