

CARING FOR YOUR BABY'S SKIN

Parents frequently ask how to care for their newborn's delicate skin. These guidelines will help you to provide daily care and deal with common problems.

Keep it Clean

You don't need a closet full of special "baby" products to keep your baby's skin clean and healthy. Simple washing with gentle soap (Dove, Neutrogena, Purpose, Caress) and water is usually best. You don't need baby oil at all, and the only place you may want to use powder is in the diaper area, sparingly. Don't shake out great clouds of talcum powder: breathing in talc particles can be harmful. There is no reason to use special diaper wipes for routine care, although they are helpful when traveling.

Most babies do not need lotions to lubricate the skin. However, if your baby has a tendency toward dry skin or has atopic dermatitis (eczema), you can alleviate the problem by:

- Using mild soap
- Cutting down on baths (perhaps two or three a week, using a gentle cleansing and moisturizing agent such as Cetaphil lotion instead of soap and water, with sponge baths in between) And
- Using moisturizing cream and lotion, such as Lubriderm, Nutraderm, Moisturel, OML, or Eucerin
- Fragrances may not be a problem for most infants; however, when skin eruptions are persistent, the use of fragrance-free soaps or lotions may be helpful.

When there's a problem

Most of the blemishes you see from time to time on your baby's skin are minor nuisances. Babies break out with a variety of conditions that look

like whiteheads and acne; these will almost always go away without treatment. Let us know if they persist or you are concerned.

Prickly heat is common in newborns. It occurs when young babies retain sweat. The best treatment is to reduce sweating by avoiding excessive heat and humidity, dressing your baby lightly, and using cool baths and air conditioning.

Two conditions that are persistent and may disturb you and the baby are cradle cap and diaper rash. Cradle cap, or seborrheic dermatitis, appears as greasy crusts, usually on the scalp but sometimes on the face, ears, trunk, and diaper area or in folds where the skin rubs together. Although it usually does not itch, it can be unsightly. The best way to treat cradle cap is with an appropriate anti-dandruff shampoo. Use slightly warmed mineral oil to loosen the crusts, then scrub gently with your fingertips while you shampoo. Cradle cap will almost always clear up on its own, usually by 1 year of age. Check with us if the condition persists or is hard to control.