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Nappy rash

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Summary

- Prevention and treatment options include more frequent nappy changes, using disposable nappies and covering the sore area with a barrier cream (such as zinc and cod liver oil or zinc and castor oil creams).
- If the nappy rash does not get better in a couple of days, or if it spreads onto the tummy, get advice and treatment from your doctor.

Nappy rash is a common result of exposure to wet or dirty nappies. Urine is normally sterile (in the absence of certain conditions or infections). However, it is irritating to skin. Leaving a wet nappy on a baby for long periods of time can lead to nappy rash.

Most babies get nappy rash at some stage, no matter how well they are cared for. Some babies may have very sensitive skin and also develop rashes on other parts of their bodies. Infections, such as thrush, make the rash worse. Some babies only get nappy rashes when they have a cold or some other viral illness.

Most cases of nappy rash can be treated successfully at home with the help of a maternal and child health nurse. See your doctor if your baby's nappy rash looks severe, is hurting your baby or doesn't clear up within a few days.

Symptoms of nappy rash

Symptoms can include:

- Inflamed skin – the skin around the genital area and anus looks red and moist.
- Blistering – the skin may blister and then peel, leaving raw patches (ulcers).
- Spreading – the rash can spread onto the tummy and buttocks.
- Ulcers – small ulcers can sometimes form on healthy skin near the area of the rash.

Damage to the skin is sore and can unsettle the baby, especially when urine comes into contact with the rash.

Causes of nappy rash

Babies who have sensitive skin, with rashes on other parts of their bodies such as cradle cap or eczema (on the face or under the chin), may be more likely to develop nappy rash.

Some things can trigger nappy rash, including:

- Ammonia – chemicals in urine irritate the skin.
- Thrush (candida) – thrush can occur spontaneously. It is more common after a baby has been given antibiotics for another infection. Thrush can aggravate nappy rash.
- Chemical exposure – some baby wipes may cause irritation or allergy. Scented soaps or baby lotions can also irritate the skin of some babies.
- Plastic pants – these keep the baby's clothes clean and dry, but prevent airflow. Because the clothes do not get wet, a baby may be left in a wet or dirty nappy for a longer and this may aggravate nappy rash.

Prevention and treatment of nappy rash

Suggestions to treat or prevent nappy rash include:

- Change your baby more frequently.
- Use disposable nappies, which better absorb urine and leave the surface of the nappy (that is next to the skin) dry.
- Use only water or ph-neutral soaps to clean your baby's bottom. Avoid wet wipes that have alcohol in them.
- Use a barrier cream, such as zinc and cod liver oil, to protect your baby's skin.
- Make sure you change cloth nappies often and, whenever possible, do not put plastic pants over them.
- If you wash your nappies in a machine, the rinse cycle is sufficient to remove traces of detergents and other chemicals. If you wash them by hand, make sure they are rinsed thoroughly in clean water. If possible, dry them in a tumble drier – this makes them much softer than drying them in the sun.

Seek medical advice

If your baby's nappy rash doesn't improve after a week or so, see your doctor. The nappy rash may be infected by thrush.

If your doctor suggests creams for thrush or steroid creams (such as hydrocortisone cream), follow the directions for use. Wash the skin and put a thin layer of the cream on the affected areas, then replace the nappy. Disposable nappies are preferable while treating nappy rash.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Maternal and child health nurse
- The Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 13 22 29
- The Royal Children's Hospital Tel. (03) 9345 5522

Things to remember

- Prevention and treatment options include more frequent nappy changes, using disposable nappies and covering the sore area with a barrier cream (such as zinc and cod liver oil or zinc and castor oil creams).
- If the nappy rash does not get better in a couple of days, or if it spreads onto the tummy, get advice and treatment from your doctor.

References

- *Nappy rash*, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Australia. [More information here.](#)

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- [Maternal and child health services](#)

[Your local maternal and child health service will be a great source of support after your baby is born...](#)

- [No Jab No Play](#)

[No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...](#)

- [Parenting services](#)

[Parenting is one of the most important tasks we undertake but it doesn't always come naturally...](#)

Newborn babies

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- [Baby bath - skin care \(video\)](#)

[Detail on baby skin care from Royal Women's Hospital...](#)

- [Jaundice in babies](#)

[If your baby is full-term and healthy, mild jaundice is nothing to worry about and will resolve by itself within a week or so...](#)

- [Newborn bloodspot screening](#)

[Every newborn baby in Australia is offered a newborn bloodspot screening test to identify those at risk of rare, but serious, medical conditions...](#)

- [Phenylketonuria \(PKU\)](#)

[PKU is an inherited disorder that prevents the normal breakdown of a protein found in some foods...](#)

- [Phototherapy at Home](#)

[Jaundice is very common in newborns, so it's nothing to be too worried about. Treatment is very easy and safe. It all happens using blue light from a special blanket that you wrap your baby in. The...](#)

- [Premature babies](#)

[Sometimes premature labour can be delayed to increase a baby's chance of survival...](#)

- [Sudden unexpected death in infants \(SUDI and SIDS\)](#)

[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)

[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)

Feeding your baby

- [Asthma - pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)

[Pregnant women with asthma need to continue to take their asthma medication as it is important to the health of both mother and baby that the mother's asthma is well managed...](#)

- [Baby care - weaning](#)

[Be guided by your baby and let them set the pace when weaning and introducing solid foods...](#)

- [Bottle feeding - nutrition and safety](#)

[Breastmilk or commercial infant formula is necessary for all babies less than 12 months...](#)

- [Breastfeeding](#)

[Breastfeeding positioning and attachment come naturally to some babies and mothers, but many need time and practice to get it right...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and travel](#)

[Breastmilk protects your baby from illness and infection, so it is the safest drink for your baby while travelling...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and work](#)

[You can successfully combine breastfeeding with work if you have support from your employer, colleagues and family...](#)

- [Breastfeeding and your diet](#)
[Breastfeeding women need to eat regularly and include a wide variety of healthy foods in their diet...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - dealing with mastitis](#)
[Mastitis affects some breastfeeding women and may be caused by blocked milk ducts or a bacterial infection...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - dealing with nipple problems](#)
[Your nipples may be sensitive in the first few days after birth, but nipple pain is not a normal part of breastfeeding...](#)
- [Breastfeeding - deciding when to stop](#)
[It is up to you and your baby to decide when breastfeeding should stop...](#)
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[Let your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days to help establish good breastfeeding patterns...](#)
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[Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth allows your baby to behave instinctively and breastfeed with little intervention...](#)
- [Food for babies - tucker talk tips](#)
[Before six months, breastmilk or formula is the only food and drink that your baby needs...](#)
- [Lactose intolerance](#)
[Symptoms of lactose intolerance include bloating, gas, abdominal pain and diarrhoea...](#)

Growth and development

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[Young babies still have a notion that the whole of life is happening inside themselves, and they are 'making it all happen'...](#)
- [Child development \(3\) - six to nine months](#)
[Fun activities, such as shaking or banging objects, helps a baby understand they have an effect on the world...](#)
- [Child development \(4\) - nine to 12 months](#)
[At nine months your baby is moving around by crawling or pulling along with their arms. Safety is very important now. Your baby is also 'talking' with recognisable sounds and may even say simple words...](#)
- [Child development \(5\) - one to two years](#)
[Between the age of one and two, your toddler understands they are a completely separate person from you...](#)
- [Child development \(6\) - two to three years](#)
[Parents can be tricked into thinking our toddlers are more grown up than they really are...](#)
- [Children's feet and shoes](#)
[A child learning to walk receives important sensory information from the soles of their feet, and shoes can make walking more difficult...](#)
- [Growth charts for children](#)
[Babies and young children do not usually grow in a perfectly smooth way, but instead grow in 'bursts'...](#)
- [Teeth development in children](#)
[Teething symptoms are common in children and can be managed without medications...](#)
- [The Maternal and Child Health phone app](#)
[The Maternal & Child Health app \(MCH\) provides reliable maternal and child health \(MCH\) information that families can use every day...](#)
- [Toilet training](#)
[When toilet training your toddler, praise every little success and remain calm about accidents...](#)

Behaviour and learning

- [10 tips for managing sibling rivalry](#)

[Teach your children to sort out minor differences themselves... 10 tips for managing sibling rivalry...](#)

- [10 tips to raise an optimistic child](#)

[Be a positive role model ... 10 tips to raise an optimistic child...](#)

- [Anxiety and fear in children](#)

[You can help your child overcome anxiety by taking their fears seriously and encouraging them to talk about their feelings...](#)

- [Children and shyness](#)

[If your child's shyness is especially debilitating, you may like to consider professional help from a counsellor or psychologist...](#)

- [Children and sibling rivalry](#)

[Sibling rivalry is a common problem, particularly among children who are the same sex and close together in age...](#)

- [Discipline and children](#)

[Disciplining your child means teaching them responsible behaviour and self-control...](#)

- [Dummies](#)

[Dummy sucking should stop before school age to avoid teeth or mouth problems...](#)

- [Left-handedness](#)

[If your child is naturally left-handed, don't try to force them to use their right hand...](#)

- [Tantrums](#)

[When a young child is having a tantrum, it is because the emotional \(limbic system\) part of the brain is dominating the child's behaviour...](#)

- [Thumb and finger sucking](#)

[Finger or thumb sucking should stop before school age to avoid mouth problems...](#)

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[If you restrict yourself to a narrow range of foods, your child will notice and copy your wariness...](#)

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- [Breakfast](#)

[Children who skip breakfast may lack sufficient vitamins and minerals including iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B2...](#)

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[Childcare centres should provide healthy meals for your children...](#)

- [Children's diet - fruit and vegetables](#)

[If you eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables every day, your child may eventually follow your lead...](#)

- [Eating tips for babies](#)

[First foods for babies can be prepared easily and cheaply at home without salt, seasonings and sweeteners...](#)

- [Eating tips for children \(3\) - older toddlers](#)

[Offer children the same foods as the family, with a variety of textures and flavours for balanced nutrition...](#)

- [Eating tips for young toddlers](#)

[Children have a natural ability to sense when they are hungry and when they are full...](#)

- [Soft drinks, juice and sweet drinks - children](#)

[Encourage children to drink and enjoy water. Sweet drinks such as juice, cordial and soft drinks may cause health problems for children if consumed in large amounts...](#)

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[Vaccinations are encouraged for all individuals living in the state of Victoria, Australia. The immunisation program in Victoria may be different than other countries, and individuals who have moved...](#)
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[Bedwetting is a problem for many children and punishing them for it will only add to their distress...](#)
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[Bronchiolitis is a common chest infection in babies under six months of age...](#)

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[Caring for a crying baby with colic can be stressful, so take some time out to calm down...](#)

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[A healthy diet, plenty of fluids, exercise and regular toilet habits can help relieve constipation in children...](#)

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[Cradle cap is not contagious and it is not caused by poor hygiene or bad parenting...](#)

- [Croup](#)

[Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...](#)

- [Fever - children](#)

[Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis in children](#)

[Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea \(runny or watery poo\) and...](#)

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- [Roseola infantum](#)

[Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children...](#)

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- [Sleep - children and naps](#)

[A child needs a daytime nap until they are around two and a half to three years of age...](#)

- [Sleep - children and nightmares](#)

[Your child may have only a few scary dreams a year, or be troubled by nightmares much more often...](#)

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[You can reduce your baby's risk of sudden unexpected death by providing a safe sleeping environment and avoiding tobacco smoke...](#)

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[Children should always be closely supervised near animals and taught how to behave safely around pets...](#)

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[Most injuries to babies do not occur by chance - many are predictable and largely preventable...](#)

- [Baby care - moving from cot to bed](#)

[Some children are unsettled the first few nights in a 'big bed'. Try to be patient, loving and reassuring...](#)

- [Baby furniture - safety tips](#)

[Even if your baby furniture meets every safety standard and recommendation, your child still needs close supervision...](#)

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[As they grow and develop, and with the help of adults, children become increasingly aware of how they can manage their own safety and become safer road and bicycle users...](#)

- [Burns and scalds - children](#)

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[The best way to reduce the risk of injury to children is to remove a potentially dangerous item or add a safety product...](#)

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[Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural problems...](#)

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[Children who live on farms are at greater risk of injury and death than their parents or other farm workers...](#)

- [Hot weather and child safety](#)

[Babies and children can quickly lose body fluids in hot weather, which can lead to dehydration...](#)

- [Playgrounds and child safety](#)

[Play environments can be safe and beneficial for your child. With proper planning, you can make sure your child gets plenty of playtime activity...](#)

- [Poisoning and child safety](#)

[Call the Poisons Information Centre on 13 11 26 immediately if you suspect your child has been poisoned or given the wrong medicine or the wrong dose of medicine...](#)

- [Road and traffic safety for children](#)

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[Toddlers are most at risk of drowning because they are mobile and curious but don't understand the danger of water...](#)

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[Child Protection provides child-centred, family-focused services to protect children from harm caused by abuse within the family...](#)

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This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Sinclair Dermatology



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