

## Paediatric Department

# Nappy rash ('napkin dermatitis')

## What is nappy rash?

Nappy rash is a reaction of the skin in the nappy area. You might also hear doctors call this "napkin dermatitis" or "diaper dermatitis".

Nappy rash is often caused by prolonged skin contact with baby's wee and poo, soaps, and skincare preparations. Detergents and fabric softeners can also irritate a baby's skin. The closed warm environment of a nappy makes these things worse.

Nappy rash is very common. 25% of infants who wear disposable nappies and 50% of babies, who wear traditional cloth nappies, get it.

## What does it look like?

Mild nappy rash is pink or red skin around the nappy area. However it can become more severe, with areas where the skin breaks down or small ulcers appear.

## Is it uncomfortable?

Nappy rash can be itchy and painful, which may cause a baby to appear distressed, agitated or uncomfortable. This can be upsetting for a parent to see.

## What can I do to help my baby at home?

- change your baby's nappies frequently
- when cleaning the nappy area, use water and cotton wool or fragrance and alcohol-free baby wipes, making sure to pat dry gently afterwards with a clean muslin
- use olive oil to remove nappy rash ointment (Metanium) rather than water
- avoid over-washing; babies have delicate skin that can dry out easily
- avoid potential irritants such as soaps and bubble baths
- disposable nappies which have absorbent gelling materials are best during an episode of nappy rash
- paracetamol, such as Calpol, can be given to babies if they need pain relief. Calpol should only be given from 2 months onwards (always read the medication instructions on the bottle).

## How long does it usually last?

Mild to moderate nappy rash when treated will usually start getting better within 3-4 days. Severe nappy rash can take up to 7 days to start healing.

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## Does it need treatment?

Mild to moderate nappy rash does not normally need medication. Nappy free time is encouraged to let the skin breathe, alongside regular application of a barrier cream or ointment such as Sudocrem or Metanium.

→ If the rash carries on or gets worse, please seek advice from your Health Visitor or GP.

If they think it could be infected they may take a skin swab and start antibiotics or anti-fungal creams to help clear it up.

## Get an urgent same day GP appointment or go to your nearest Emergency (A&E) Department if

- your baby is under 3 months of age and has a fever over 38 degrees C, or is 3-6 months of age with a fever above 39 degrees C
- your baby is feeding less than half of their usual feeds
- your baby is passing less urine than usual (fewer than 3 wet nappies in 24 hours)
- they seem very irritable and are not comforted by feeds or by paracetamol. Paracetamol should only be given to babies if they are over 2 months of age (always read the instructions on the bottle).

## For more information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/nappy-rash/>



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