

# Caring for a new baby's skin, hair and nails

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(HealthDay)—Caring for a baby's delicate skin, hair and nails can be intimidating, but five simple steps can make it easier, according to an expert from the American Academy of Dermatology.

"With their tiny hands and feet, babies can seem so fragile and vulnerable," said dermatologist Dr. Kachiu Lee. "However, [babies](#) are more resilient than you might think, and parents can maintain good hygiene for their baby by following a few general guidelines."

**Bathing:** Keep your baby clean with gentle bathing two to three times a week. Do sponge baths until your baby's umbilical cord stump falls off and heals. Then, you can switch to traditional baths.

Use lukewarm water and mild, fragrance-free baby soap and shampoo. Apply soap only to dirty areas, such as creases in the neck and diaper area, and rinse off thoroughly after cleaning.

**Diapering:** Change dirty diapers as soon as possible, even if they are just wet, to prevent [diaper rash](#). If a diaper rash develops, be gentle when cleaning the diaper area and apply a zinc oxide [diaper](#) cream.

**Caring for nails:** Trim your baby's nails whenever they get sharp to prevent scratches. Use a nail file or emery board to create a rounded, not jagged, shape.

**Laundering:** Wash baby blankets, sheets and clothing before and after use, using fragrance-free detergents.

**Sun protection:** Shade is the best protection. If there's no natural shade, use an umbrella, canopy or stroller hood. Dress your baby in sun-protective clothing, including a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt, pants, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection.

Minimal use of sunscreen is advised for children younger than 6 months of age, but you can apply a small amount of sunscreen to all skin not covered by clothing if shade and adequate clothing aren't available.

Use sunscreens with broad-spectrum protection, water-resistance and an SPF of 30 or higher. Sunscreens containing [titanium dioxide](#) or zinc oxide are less likely to irritate your baby's sensitive skin. Reapply every two hours or immediately after swimming.

"Maintaining healthy skin care habits during infancy, such as protecting your baby from the sun, can have a long-lasting impact on your child's health," Lee said.

**More information:** The American Academy of Pediatrics explains [how to prepare for the arrival of your newborn](#).

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