

The do's and don'ts of diaper rash

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(Medical Xpress)—Almost every parent has to deal with it – diaper rash. Though the problem is common, it's also extremely painful and uncomfortable for the child and can leave parents at a loss for how to comfort their little one.

"Diaper rash is caused by the skin's reaction to irritants such as excessive moisture, lotions, wipes, diapers or a child's waste," said Bridget Boyd, MD, director of the [newborn nursery](#) at Loyola University Medical Center and assistant professor of Pediatrics at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

According to Boyd, breast-fed babies may be more prone to diaper rash since they tend to produce looser stool more frequently.

"I recommend that parents put a barrier cream with [zinc oxide](#) on a baby's bottom with each diaper change during times of frequent stools. This keeps a barrier between the child's skin and the moisture that causes the irritation," Boyd said. "When choosing a cream, make sure it's thick. In this case, the thicker it is the better."

Diaper rash can be caused when the skin is exposed to a new product such as lotion, a new brand of paper diaper or wipes.

"If you've tried a new product on the baby's skin and notice a rash, go back to the old product for a few days. Then, try the new product again. If the rash happens again, don't use the new product," Boyd said.

She also suggests parents stay away from wipes with alcohol or

fragrances as they tend to irritate the skin more.

"Even wipes that are marketed for use on sensitive skin can still irritate fragile skin, so if your child has diaper rash try to avoid the use of any wipes. Instead try using a small squeeze water bottle with warm water to clean the bottom and pat dry with a soft, clean washcloth," Boyd said.

If a child does develop diaper rash she suggests:

- Expose the affected area to as much air as you can. Consider having the baby take a nap on a burp rag or open cloth diaper.
- Change diapers often.
- Oatmeal baths and soaks can help ease the pain of the raw skin.
- If a child is older than 2 months, consider pain-relief medication.

The No. 1 cause of diaper rash is loose stool, so if your child is starting to get sick be sure to apply a barrier cream often. Most diaper rash will go away with time and the proper treatment. Still, there are times when what appears to be diaper rash might be something more.

If the rash is causing pain and not improving with the normal treatment, it's possible it could be a yeast rash.

"Healthy babies have yeast in their stool and diapers are a perfect breeding ground since yeast like to live in dark, warm, wet places. If the rash looks bright red, is in the skin folds and if it doesn't get better after three days of treating it, you might want to have your pediatrician take a look to make sure there isn't anything concerning," Boyd said.

She also suggests contacting your pediatrician if:

- The child has a fever unrelated to another illness.
- The raw [skin](#) oozes pus.
- The rash is scabbed over.
- The redness is spreading.
- There is an abscess or boil.

"Diaper rash isn't an emergency and most likely will go away in a few days, but if you are concerned your pediatrician can always take a look," Boyd said.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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