

Baby skincare

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Cord care

Cord care for the healthy newborn



Keep the cord area clean and dry. The best way to do this is to leave the area alone. After the first bath in plain water, pat dry with a towel and fold back the nappy at each change until the cord falls off.

In the first few days, it is advisable to avoid washing the cord area, allowing it to dry out. If the area becomes soiled, wet gauze squares can be used – otherwise leave alone. Do not use any wipes or powder. If the cord or surrounding areas becomes red, tell a member of staff. This advice is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations.

Cord care for the baby in the neonatal unit may be different, to prevent infections. Be guided by the staff in the neonatal unit and they will advise you on the best possible care for your baby.

Bath care



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Before and after carrying out any baby care, it is very important to wash your hands. Your baby's first bath should just be with plain water and cotton wool. This will help to protect the delicate skin while it is vulnerable to germs, chemicals and water loss. A baby comb can be used to gently remove any debris from thick hair after delivery.

Vernix (the white sticky substance that covers your baby's skin in the womb) should be left to absorb naturally. This is nature's own moisturiser.

If your baby is overdue, the skin may be dry and cracked. This is normal, as the protective vernix has all been absorbed. Do not use any creams or lotions as this may do more harm than good, but ask a member of staff if you are concerned. The top layer of skin will peel off over the next few days, leaving perfect skin underneath. This will need two to four weeks for baby to develop a naturally protective barrier.

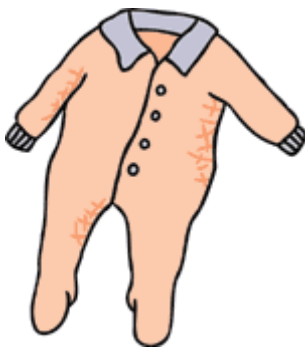
It is best to leave the delicate area around the eyes untouched. If it becomes sticky, tell a member of staff and they will advise you. The ears and nose should also be left alone; cotton buds should not be used.

On the neonatal unit, your baby may need to wait for a bath until he/she is well and can keep him/herself warm.

Your baby may feel more relaxed and will conserve more energy if they are put in the bath water wrapped in a sheet or muslin.

The midwife or nursing staff will be happy to help you with bathing your baby, and can advise on how to keep your baby warm and safe, whilst enjoying this time together.

Handy tips



Continue with plain water for about 8 weeks. When baby products are gradually introduced they should have a neutral pH and be free of preservative, perfumes and alcohol. Baby wipes should also be avoided for two to four weeks. A thin layer of barrier cream can be used, if needed, on the nappy area. Read the product labels and avoid use of sulphates, parabens, phthalates and propylene glycol.

Wash all baby clothes and bedding prior to use and routinely in non-biological washing powder and rinse thoroughly. Fabric conditioner products should be mild and free from colours and perfumes.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

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Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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