

Diaper Rash

Diaper rash is very common. There are several causes, and its treatment depends on what is causing it.

What is diaper rash?

Diaper rash (or dermatitis) is irritation of the skin in your child's diaper area. It is very common.

The diaper holds in moisture and keeps the area damp and warm. This can encourage the growth of bacteria and yeast. Pee (urine) and poop (stool) can also irritate the skin. All of these can cause a rash.

What causes diaper rash? How is diaper rash treated?

There are several different causes of diaper rash. See 4 possible causes below. How your child's diaper rash is treated depends on what is causing it.

- **Irritation** - Urine and stool irritating the skin is the most common cause of diaper rash.

Treat these rashes using creams and ointments containing zinc oxide to protect the skin and allow it to heal. There are many over-the-counter diaper creams with zinc oxide, but a basic zinc oxide ointment that does not have fragrance is a good choice.

- **Yeast** Called *Candida albicans*, yeast naturally live in the diaper area on all children. Antibiotics, like those used to treat ear infections, can cause the yeast to overgrow.

Treat yeast infections with an antifungal cream, like nystatin or clotrimazole. Your child's healthcare provider can talk with you about what would be best for your child.

- **Bacterial infections** Can cause diaper rash and may require antibiotic treatment. Bacterial infections are treated by antibiotics prescribed by your child's healthcare provider. They might be taken by mouth (oral) or put on the skin (topical).
 - **An allergy or sensitivity** - Your child may be allergic or sensitive to creams, ointments, wipes, soaps, or diapers, which can also cause a rash. Your child's care provider may prescribe a mild steroid to apply to the affected area of skin (topical steroid). It is important to stop using the product that causes your child's allergy.
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To Learn More

- Dermatology
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org/patient-education

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



How can I prevent diaper rash?

- Keep the diaper area as dry as possible. When changing the diaper, gently dry the area and keep the diaper off for a short period of time to allow your child's bottom to dry completely.
- Use baby wipes sparingly or avoid them altogether. Using wipes too much can be irritating because of the friction on the skin. Try using baby wipes that do not have fragrances and only after bowel movements.
- You can also try rinsing your child off with warm water in the bath/sink or use cotton balls saturated with mineral oil to help gently remove stool from your child's bottom.
- Choose diapers that work best for your child. Disposable diapers are better at absorbing moisture and keeping it away from the skin. Disposable diapers also allow for the use of zinc oxide creams, which is often not allowed with cloth diapers, because it makes them less absorbent.
- Rarely, children can develop an allergy to diapers themselves. Try avoiding diapers that have dyes, fragrances or have been bleached.
- Avoid using baby powder, because it can get in the lungs and cause breathing issues. It can also mix with urine and sweat to create an irritating paste.
- Apply petroleum jelly (like Vaseline) or a diaper cream with zinc oxide. Do this if your child has diaper rashes often. Apply petroleum jelly or zinc oxide cream to the diaper area after each diaper change, even if there is no rash. This may help prevent diaper rash by forming a protective barrier between your child's skin and their urine and stool.