

Dealing with your child's diaper rash

Paediatric dermatologist Shanna Ng explains how to treat this condition that may keep recurring, especially in infants from between nine and 12 months old



Change your baby's diapers frequently and use a diaper cream after cleaning to prevent diaper dermatitis. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Mums of newborns and toddlers will likely have noticed red patches on their child's buttocks during a diaper change. Commonly referred to as "nappy rash", diaper dermatitis is what happens when skin is irritated from moisture in urine, stools and sweat. The condition can also be made worse if a secondary fungal or bacterial infection occurs. Mount Alvernia Hospital paediatric dermatologist Shanna Ng shares about treatment options and what ingredients in skincare products may help.

Q My child's diaper dermatitis is causing a lot of discomfort. What can be done?

The most important thing to do is change the moist diapers more frequently. It is best to avoid using wet wipes because ingredients in the wet wipes may further irritate the skin. Instead, use facial cotton pads or gauze moistened with water to wipe the diaper region. To prevent recurrence, apply a diaper cream after cleaning, every time you change the diaper.

Treatment options range from very mild potency steroid and non-steroid anti-inflammatory ointments, to antibiotic ointments or anti-fungal creams. These can be prescribed based on the appearance of the condition. Skin scrapings or swab tests may also be conducted to exclude secondary infections, such as bacterial or fungal infections, that may have occurred on top of the existing wound.

Q Are there any skincare ingredients which might trigger my child's diaper dermatitis?

You may want to avoid diaper creams with fragrances, essential oils or preservatives such as methylisothiazolinone or methylchloroisothiazolinone, which can lead to

allergic contact dermatitis, especially if the skin barrier is already compromised from the pre-existing dermatitis.

Zinc oxide and petrolatum-based products can help to reduce the risk of diaper dermatitis. While some parents express concern about potential excessive dryness from zinc oxide, products containing less than 15 per cent can still prevent irritation with less dryness.

In cases of diarrhoea or frequent soiling, higher concentrations (up to 40 per cent) may be necessary for adequate protection.

Q Are cloth diapers better for my child than disposable diapers?

Both cloth and disposable diapers are fine, as long as they are changed regularly. As cloth diapers are less absorbent, you may instinctively change them more frequently, hence reducing the chances of your child developing diaper dermatitis.

Q How long will my child's diaper dermatitis take to heal?

This condition can be recurring, especially in infants from between nine and 12 months old. Otherwise, each episode should typically heal in seven to 10 days, barring any secondary infections which may lengthen the course of recovery.



Dr Shanna Ng Shan Yi
Paediatric dermatologist
Ark Dermatology
St Anne Mother & Child Centre
#02-81
Mount Alvernia Hospital