Caring for Baby's Skin, Cord (Navel), and Diaper Area

Caring for your baby’s skin is very important in order to keep him healthy.

Skin care:

1. Keep your baby’s skin clean by bathing him at least every 1 to 2 days. Sponge bathe him until his cord falls off. Be sure to wash his hair. Only use mild soap like unscented Dove® or baby soap, as needed.
2. Avoid using lotions, oils, or cream on your baby’s skin. If your baby’s skin is very dry, you may apply a small amount of lotion such as Nivea, Moisturel®, Curél®, or Aquaphor®.
3. Do not apply baby oil to your baby’s scalp. It blocks the skin pores and can lead to cradle cap.
4. Avoid using baby powder. It can be inhaled into your baby’s lungs and cause breathing problems.

Cord care:

1. If the umbilical cord is still present, apply rubbing alcohol with a cotton ball or swab at the base of the cord at least twice a day when the diaper is changed and after your baby is bathed.
2. Fold the diaper below the cord. This will help keep the cord dry.
3. When the cord falls off, continue to clean the navel with alcohol until it is healed and dry.
4. Notify your doctor if there is redness, smelly, thick yellow or green discharge or a lot of bleeding from the navel area.

Diaper area/genital care:

1. Check your baby’s diaper for wetness (urine) or stool at least every 2 to 3 hours and at each feeding time. Change if needed.
2. Baby girl:
   Clean genitalia by wiping from front to back. Gently clean between the skin folds.
   Baby boy:
   Remember to clean under the scrotum when changing the diaper. If your baby is uncircumcised, it is not necessary to retract the foreskin to clean the penis. Wash any discharge off with soap and water. As your child gets older, talk to your baby's doctor about how to clean under the foreskin.
3. For more information, see the "Circumcision" and "Diaper Rash" CARE CARDS.

If you have questions or concerns, call your baby's doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188.