



## *Diaper Rash*

Diaper rash or diaper dermatitis is one of the most common problems in infancy. The diaper area, tightly covered by the plastic pants or plastic-covered diapers, is damp and warm. This environment encourages the growth of bacteria and yeast, and increases irritation from urine and stool. It used to be thought that urinary ammonia was a cause of diaper rash, but research has shown that the concentration of ammonia and the strength in a baby's urine are the same in infants with or without diaper rash.

The treatment of diaper rash is most successful if the reason for the diaper dermatitis is found. The baby's skin may be more sensitive to irritants than that of older individuals. In fact, irritant dermatitis from exposure to urine or frequent loose stools is the most common cause of diaper rash. Not uncommonly, yeast (*Candida albicans*) may grow in the diaper area. The use of oral antibiotics (for example, for ear infections) may encourage the overgrowth of yeast in the diaper area. Occasionally, bacteria may grow in the diaper area and require antibiotic treatment. An allergic reaction from a cream or ointment may also cause a rash in the diaper area.

The diaper area should always be kept as dry as possible and covered with a thick layer of a barrier cream. When changing the diaper after urination, the area should be dried gently and exposed to air for a short period of time to dry completely. Washing the area each time that the baby urinates may be irritating. If commercial baby wipes are not irritating, they may be used after each bowel movement. If the commercial baby wipes are irritating, plain water may be used to clean after each bowel movement.

Studies comparing cloth diapers to plastic covered, disposable diapers are not conclusive, but many doctors feel that the new thin disposable diapers decrease the incidence of diaper rash. Recently, Vaseline impregnated disposable diapers have become available.

Ointments such as Desitin, Balmex or A&D ointment can prevent the skin from coming in contact with irritants. The doctor may prescribe a mild corticosteroid preparation to be applied to the affected areas if an irritant dermatitis is suspected. Using a prescription antifungal salve for three weeks best treats yeast infections.

### ***For Questions or Emergency Care:***

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.