

# Keeping Baby Healthy:

## Umbilical cord stump care

Take good care of your baby's umbilical cord stump (belly button area). If you take good care of it, the cord stump will dry up and fall off by the time your baby is 1-3 weeks old. Your baby can get an infection if the cord is not cleaned right.

### What the umbilical cord stump looks like:

- At birth, the cord is wet and white.
- After it is clamped, it turns brown then black as it dries.
- Some hospitals may put medicine on the cord to help it dry. This may stain the cord purple.

### Caring for the cord before it falls off:

- The cord stump will fall off by itself, usually by the time baby is 1-3 weeks old.
- Do NOT try to pull the cord stump off, even if it is hanging on by a thread.
- If your baby goes home with a clamp attached to his umbilical cord stump, find out when your doctor plans to remove the clamp.
- Dress your baby in a loose-fitting outfit that does not pull on the umbilical cord stump. Tight outfits can pull and tear the cord stump.
- Do not put binders, coins, belly bands, tape or other things on your baby's belly, because these things can hurt your baby.
- Clean your baby's cord area with each diaper change.

### How to keep the umbilical cord stump clean and dry:

- Fold your baby's diaper below the cord stump to keep it clean and dry. Some diapers have holes or cut-outs to allow the cord to be exposed to air.
- When you change your baby's diaper, make sure to clean any urine or stool off the cord. You may use warm water and a

mild soap on a cotton ball to clean during diaper changes, then gently pat the cord dry with a washcloth.

- Do not bathe your baby in a tub or sink of water while the cord stump is still on. Give your baby a sponge bath until the cord stump falls off. There are special newborn tubs that help you bathe baby and keep the cord stump out of the water.
- Your health care provider may tell you to wipe the cord area with rubbing alcohol several times a day until the cord is completely healed and it drops off. Follow any instructions that the health care provider gives you.

When the cord falls off, it is normal to see a few drops of blood on the baby's belly or diaper.

### Contact your baby's doctor or nurse if your baby's umbilical cord area:

- Gets red or swollen
- Has pus or other fluid draining from the cord site, especially after the cord has come off
- Smells bad
- Pushes or bulges outwards when baby cries
- Starts to bleed more than a drop or two, or
- If the cord has not come off by 4-6 weeks of age.

### Call your baby's health care provider right away if:

- Your baby cries when you touch the cord or the skin around the cord stump
- Your baby develops a fever greater than 99.0° under his arm
- If you notice redness, swelling, warmth, tenderness, or increased drainage from the cord site.



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