

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

How to Care for Your Premature Baby's Skin

Babies who are born early can have very thin and tender skin. The earlier the baby was born, the more sensitive the skin. This thin skin can be easily injured. The skin will get stronger by the time your baby is three to four weeks old.

Skin keeps germs out of the body. Infections can start through injured skin. So it is very important to keep your baby's skin clean, dry, safe from harm, and healthy.

Bathing:

Bathing takes germs off the skin. Babies get sponge baths until they are strong enough to handle a tub bath. Then we bathe babies in little tubs. You may use our tubs or bring your own.

Babies usually get a bath within twenty-four hours of birth, unless they are very sick. Sometimes we use warm, sterile water for this first bath. You may bathe your baby or help the nurse with the bath.

After the first bath, your baby will be bathed every 3 to 4 days. Tell the nurse if you want to wash your baby, or help the nurse with the bath. If your baby is not treated with **bili lights**, you may bring in baby clothes to put on your baby after the bath. Ask your doctor or nurse if your baby can wear clothes while in the hospital.



Babies who are born early can have very thin and tender skin.

For the first two weeks, your baby will be washed with only warm, sterile water. After two weeks, we use a mild baby soap that has no perfume or deodorant in it. We may also use a mild shampoo.

If you want to learn more about bathing, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout **How to Bathe Your Premature or Sick Baby** (#457).



Tell the nurse if you want to wash your baby, or help the nurse with the bath.

It is normal for babies to have dry, flaky skin. This is usually treated with Aquaphor ointment or Eucerin cream. These are safe for very little babies. However, these products cannot be used on your baby if your baby is being treated with bili lights. Your baby's skin is so thin that anything that you put on it can go right through into the body. The chemicals in some products could hurt your baby.

Do not use any powder or oil on your baby's skin. Powders get in the air, babies could breathe them in and they can hurt their lungs. Oils clog the skin pores and cause rashes and infections.

If your baby is less than 28 weeks gestational age, your baby will need humidity to help the skin be prepared for the outside world (**keratinized**). Your baby will not get a bath until your baby does not need this humidified air. Then your baby will get a bath every 3 to 4 days with sterile water.

If there is a concern for infection from the amniotic fluid (**chorioamnionitis**), then your baby will get a bath right away with sterile water and cotton balls.

yes no **High Frequency Oscillator Ventilator**

The skin of babies on **High Frequency Oscillator Ventilators** is protected by a very soft mattress. If your baby can handle it, we will turn your baby every three to four hours. Sometimes babies need to be turned more frequently. Ask your baby's doctor or nurse how frequently your baby will be turned.

yes no **Other equipment and your baby's skin**

Your baby's skin may get red, crack and bleed. **Monitor patches and probes for temperature and oximeter** may bother your baby's skin. Tape from the IVs and breathing machine tubes can irritate the skin. Your nurse will tell you what is being used to help heal your baby's skin. Watch your baby's skin closely for any irritation and let the doctor or nurse know if you see any areas that are red or irritated.

Diaper Care:

Change your baby's diapers often. Save the diaper for the nurse to weigh. Clean your baby's diaper area with warm sterile water and soft cloth wipes or water wipes and gently pat dry.

Use baby wipes only when your baby is older. Baby wipes have alcohol and perfumes. They can irritate the skin and cause bad diaper rashes.

Diaper Rash is any skin irritation in the diaper area. If your baby has a diaper rash:

- Keep the diaper area clean and dry.
- Keep the diaper open or loosely attach diaper. This will let air reach the diaper area.
- Your doctor may give you an ointment to put on the rash. There are different medicines for different rashes.
- A cream, like zinc oxide, protects the skin.
- Instead of wiping your baby's skin, use a squeeze bottle or syringe with a running stream of water. This is gentle on your baby's sore bottom.
- If you are home with your baby, and the diaper rash does not go away with this treatment, or gets worse, call your baby's doctor.

Other ways to care for your baby:

Mouth Care:

- Your baby's lips can be very dry. Soak some gauze in sterile water, and gently wipe your baby's lips.
- You may clean and wet the inside of your baby's mouth with breastmilk. Your nurse can show you how.

Eye Care:

- Use warm water on your baby's face. Do not use soap.
- Use a different, damp cloth for each eye. Gently wipe each eye from the nose to the ear. This will keep you from passing germs from one eye to the other.

Cord Care:

- Keep the cord stump dry. Clean it with soap and water, and pat it dry. Do not put alcohol on the cord, because it can pass through the skin into your baby.
- Keep the diaper from touching the cord to help it stay dry.
- If an IV is in the cord, your nurse will clean it with a Betadine swab once or twice a day.

Clothing:

- Before you bring in clothes, ask your baby's nurse if your baby can wear clothes yet. Sometimes the treatments and tubes make it difficult.

Laundry Hints:

- Take dirty clothes home to wash.
- Use a separate laundry container for baby's clothes.
- Separate your baby's laundry from the rest of the family wash. Do not wash other clothes with your baby's clothes.
- Read and follow the washing instructions on your baby's clothes.
- Wash baby's laundry in Dreft or Ivory Snow.
- Rinse your baby's laundry very well. If you have your own machine, run the clothes through another rinse to get all the soap out.
- Do not use a fabric softener with scent, because the perfume may bother the baby.

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse the difference between your skin and the skin of a premature baby. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse how you will care for your baby's skin. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,
 call your child's doctor or call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter
Pinterest: pinterest.com/emilycenter

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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How to Care for Your Premature Baby's Skin

Name of Health Care Provider: _____

Date returned: _____ db

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading
this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any
questions about the subject? Yes No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center
Health Education Specialist
Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

Thank you for helping us!