

Umbilical Cord - Cord Care

Definition

- Questions about how to care for the normal umbilical cord or navel in newborns
- The navel is also called the belly button or umbilicus
- The piece of cord that stays on the baby is called the umbilical stump

Health Information

Normal Cord

- Normal cords don't need any special treatment.
- Just keep them dry (called natural drying).
- Reason: Cords need to dry up, before they will fall off.
- As they dry up, cords normally change color. They go from a shiny yellowish hue, to brown or gray.
- The cord will normally fall off between 1 and 3 weeks.

Normal Navel (Belly Button)

- After the cord has fallen off, the navel will gradually heal.
- It's normal for the center to look red at the point of separation.
- It's not normal if the redness spreads on to the belly.
- It's normal for the navel to ooze some secretions.
- Sometimes, the navel forms a scab. It heals up and falls off on its own.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Normal cords don't need any special treatment.
- Just keep them dry (called dry cord care or natural drying).
- Reason: Cords need to dry up, before they will fall off.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Normal Dry Cord Care:

- If there are any secretions, clean them away. Use a wet cotton swab. Then, dry carefully.
- You will need to push down on the skin around the cord to get at this area. You may also need to bend the cord a little to get underneath it.
- Caution: Don't put alcohol or other germ killer on the cord. Reason: Dry cords fall off sooner. (Exception: Instructed by your doctor to use rubbing alcohol).

3. Bathing:

- Keep the cord dry. Avoid tub baths.
- Use sponge baths until the cord falls off.

4. **Diapers:**

- Keep the area dry to help healing.
- To provide air contact, keep the diaper folded down below the cord.
- Another option for disposable diapers is to cut off a wedge with a scissors. Then seal the edge with tape.

5. **Poop on Cord:**

- Getting some poop on the cord or navel is not serious.
- If it occurs, clean the area with soap and water.
- This should prevent any infections.

6. **What to Expect:**

- As they dry up, cords normally change color. They go from a shiny yellowish hue, to brown or gray.
- The average cord falls off between 10 and 14 days. Normal range is 7 to 21 days. The cord can't fall off too early.
- After the cord has fallen off, the navel will gradually heal.

Call Your Doctor If

- Develops a red streak or redness around belly button
- Fever occurs
- Your baby starts to look or act abnormal
- You think your baby needs to be seen

Pediatric Care Advice

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