

Soft Spot in Babies - Normal

Definition

- The soft spot is a diamond shaped area on the top of the head
- The medical name for this non-bony spot is the anterior fontanel
- There's another much smaller fontanel in back. It may be harder to find

Health Information

Purpose of the Soft Spot

- The soft spot is located where 2 suture lines of the skull cross. Suture lines are where skull growth occurs.
- Babies have a soft spot to allow the bones of the skull to expand as the brain grows. The brain grows fast during the early years.
- The soft spot becomes larger over the first 2 or 3 months of life. This is normal. Then, it slowly closes by around 18 months.

Care Advice

1. Soft Spot - Normal Size:

- Soon after birth, the soft spot is about 1 by 1 inch.
- It can get as large as 2 by 2 inches.
- The fontanel gets a little bigger over the first few months of life.
- Then it slowly becomes smaller until it closes.
- It normally looks flat or slightly sunken.
- It may move up and down (pulsate) with each beat of the heart. Easier to see if your baby is sitting up and quiet.
- Caution: The soft spot should not look raised or bulging. If it does, it means that the brain is under some pressure. Your baby would need to be seen right away. This is rare.

2. Touching the Soft Spot is Safe:

- It is quite safe to touch the soft spot. Be gentle of course.
- The open space between the bones is covered by a thick fibrous membrane. It is tough and protects the brain.
- You can wash your baby's hair without worrying about hurting the soft spot.
- You can also brush your baby's hair with a soft brush.

3. What to Expect:

- A soft spot is closed when the opening can no longer be felt. That means bone now covers most of the area.
- The soft spot is open during the first year or so of life.
- It closes between 12 and 24 months. (18 months on the average)
- Rarely it closes as young as 6 months. That's still normal.

Call Your Doctor If

- Soft spot becomes swollen or bulges
- You think your child needs to be seen
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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