

CORD CARE



Postpartum Parent Support Program

Information Sheet

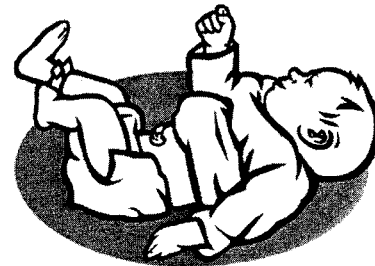
Normal Healing of the Cord

A newborn's umbilical cord is a bluish-white colour immediately after birth. The cord dries up, darkens and falls off spontaneously between the first and third weeks. When it does, it may leave a raw area at the point of attachment. Sometimes this may cause a small amount of blood spotting, but the area will soon heal.

Recommendations for Cord Care

It is very important to keep the cord dry, until the cord heals and falls off. As parents you may hear about differing ways to care for the cord. Even in health research, there are different points of view. The most important thing for you as a parent to do, is to make sure the cord is allowed to dry.

In the past and currently in many hospitals, parents are advised to clean the cord base gently with cotton-tipped applicators saturated with rubbing alcohol. The alcohol is believed to help the healing process by drying the cord. This procedure is painless, but your baby may cry because the alcohol feels cold to the skin. Others suggest that just cleaning the cord with water in the same manner as above as part of the sponge bath is fine, too. After a tub bath, you also need to thoroughly dry the cord using a dry cotton-tipped applicator.



Clean the cord base two or three times daily, at bath time or with each diaper change, until healed. Try to keep the cord as dry as possible. Always clean and dry it thoroughly after the bath (sponge or tub). If using alcohol, be careful not to let alcohol come in contact with a fresh circumcision wound, if there is one.

Also fold down the top of the diaper to expose the cord and, of course, keep the baby in dry diapers.

If the cord area becomes red, smells funny, or has a discharge, call your physician.

If you would like a demonstration of how to care for your baby's cord or help deciding whether the cord is healing properly, the hospital or community health nurse will be pleased to help you.

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Communication Canada
Ottawa, ON, Canada K1A 0S9

Catalogue No.: H39-153/13-2003E

ISBN: 0-660-18953-4

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