



CARE OF NEWBORN'S UMBILICAL CORD

The umbilical cord has been the newborn's lifeline for almost 10 months. After delivery, the umbilical cord is clamped and cut. The small stub, or belly button, must be treated with care until it falls off on its own.

Until the umbilical cord falls off, the baby should receive only sponge baths, not full immersion. Gently clean the stub 3 or 4 times a day with a cotton ball or Q Tip dipped in alcohol or peroxide. Be sure to clean the base of the cord by gently lifting the end of the stub. Keep diapers and shirts away from the stub to facilitate drying and to avoid irritation.

The stub should fall off on its own in 1 to 3 weeks. Keep cleaning the area for a few days to make sure the site is completely healed.

Problems can result if the umbilicus isn't cleaned properly. If you don't clean the crater of the belly button thoroughly, the tissue at the base of the cord will begin to grow new cells and form a growth called a granuloma. A physician can stop this growth by administering one or two painless applications of silver nitrate.

If any signs of infection appear, including redness or swelling of the belly button and surrounding area, a foul-smelling, yellowish discharge, or bleeding of the naval after the stub falls off, contact a physician immediately.

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