

## GROOMING YOUR BABY

Babies smell pretty terrific naturally, and as far as their grooming needs are concerned, less is almost always more. So buy products that have a few additives and fragrances as possible (as the baby skin is very sensitive), and remember that many products marketed to parents of infants aren't even necessary. The following list contains the utmost essential things that may be required for grooming the baby-

- **Baby soap or bath liquid or foam.** *Baby shower soap* is to be used sparingly and a gentle formula must be looked for. *Natural soap for baby* are advisable
- **No-tears baby shampoo.** For young infants, no-tears *baby bath* or foam can be used for shampoo. *Natural baby shampoo* is also available.
- **Baby oil.** This can come in handy if you need to gently clean a stick bowel movement off a sore bottom. It's also often prescribed for a *cradle cap*. *Baby oil ingredients* should be checked before a purchase.
- **Baby powder.** It is a must in warm weather and optional in winters. Do not use a *talc baby powder*. You can also use corn flour as a powder.
- **Ointments or cream for nappy rash.** Ask the doctor for recommendations as many creams are available in the market.
- **Petroleum jelly.** Such as Vaseline, for lubricating rectal thermometers. Do not use it for treating *nappy rash*.
- **Baby wipe.** For *nappy changes*, hand washing on the go, cleanups after spit ups and *leaky nappy incidents*, and dozens of other uses. But use cotton wool balls and plain water for cleansing babies bottom during the first few weeks and whenever *nappy rash* is a problem. *Baby dry wipe* or *baby wet wipe* may be used.
- **Sterile cotton wool balls.** For cleaning baby's eyes, for nappy changes in the first few weeks and when baby has a nappy rash.
- **Baby nail scissors or clippers nail.** Never use sharp adult scissors; babies are squirmy and cuts can easily result.
- **Baby brush and comb.** Hairless babies won't need it for a few months at least. If baby ends up having lots of hair, use only wide toothed baby combs for hair that's wet and tangled.

**Nappy pins.** You may need at least eight of them. Metal heads are better than plastic, which crack easily.

Items needed for nappy changes should be kept on a shelf high enough above the changing table to prevent baby's grabbing for them but low enough for you to reach easily. While buying lotions for your baby read the labels carefully and doesn't buy those that contain *peanut oil*. Researchers have found that infants who re rubbed with such creams may be at higher risks of developing peanut allergies by age two.

## **BABY NAIL**

Although trimming a newborn's tiny fingernails may make most new parents uneasy, it's a job that must be done. Little hands with little control and long fingernails can do a lot of damage, usually in the form of scratches on his or her own face. An infant's nails are often overgrown at birth (it's hard to get a trim in utero) and so soft that cutting through them is nearly as easy as cutting through a piece of paper. Getting your baby to hold still for the procedure however won't be so easy.

Cutting a baby's nails while he or she is sleeping may work if you've got a sound sleeper or if you don't mind waking him or her. When baby's awake, it's best to trim the nails with the help of an assistant who can hold each hand as you cut. Always use a special *baby nail scissors* or *baby nail clippers* which has rounded tips - if baby starts to bolt at the wrong moment, no one will be jabbed with a sharp point. To avoid nipping the skin as you clip the nail. Press the ringer pad down and out of the way as you cut. Even with this precaution you may, however, occasionally draw blood - most parents do at one time or another. If you do, apply pressure with a sterile gauze pad until bleeding stops, a plaster probably won't be needed.

## ***EAR CARE***

The old adage 'Never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ears' is advocated not only by grandmothers but also by modern medical authorities as well. They agree that putting anything in the ear that fits - whether it's a coin inserted by a *curious toddler* or a cotton swab inserted by a well-meaning parent - is dangerous.

Do wipe your baby's outer ears with a flannel or cotton wool ball, but don't try to venture into the *ear canal* itself with swabs, fingers or anything else. It may harm the *ear drum*. The ear is naturally self-cleaning, and trying to remove wax by probing may only force it further into the ear. If *ear wax* seems to be accumulating, ask the doctor about it at the next visit.

## ***NOSE CARE***

As with the inside of the ears, the inside of the nose is self-cleaning and needs no special care. If there is a discharge, wipe the outside, but do not use cotton swabs, twisted tissues or your fingernail to try to remove material from inside in case of a *stuffy nose* - you may only push the matter back farther into the *nose in*, or even scratch delicate membranes. If baby has a lot of mucus due to a *cold nose*, suction it out with an infant nasal aspirator.

## BABY BURP

Milk isn't all baby swallows when sucking on a nipple. Along with that nutritive fluid comes non-nutritive air, which can make a baby feel uncomfortably full before he or she's finished a meal. That's why *burping baby* is needed so as to bring up any excess air that's accumulated - every 60 ml (2 fl oz) or so when bottle feeding, and between breasts when breastfeeding (or mid breast, if a young infant is managing only one breast at a time ) - is such an important part of the feeding process. There must be a proper *burping time*.

There are three ways of doing this - on your shoulder, face down on your lap, or sitting up - and it's a good idea to try them all to see which works most efficiently for both you and baby. Though a gentle pat or rub may get the burp up for most babies, some need a slightly firmer hand

- **On your shoulder.** Hold baby firmly against your shoulder, firmly supporting the buttocks with one hand and patting or rubbing the back with other.
- **Face down on your lap.** Turn baby down face down on your lap, stomach over one leg, head resting on the other. Holding him or her securely with one hand, pat or rub with the other.
- **Sitting Up.** Sit baby on your lap head leaning forward, chest supported by your arm as you hold him or her under the chin. Pat or rub, being sure not to let baby's head flop backwards.

## HOW TO SHAMPOO A BABY?

This is a fairly painless process with a young baby. But to help forestall future *shampoo phobias*, avoid getting even *tearless soap or shampoo* in your baby's eyes from the first. Shampoo only once or twice a week, unless *cradle cap* or a particularly oily scalp requires more frequent head cleanings.

1. Wet baby's hair with a gentle spray from the sink hose or by pouring a little water from a cup. Add just a drop or *baby shampoo* or baby soap (more will make rinsing difficult), and rub in lightly to produce a lather. A foam product may be easier to control
2. Hold baby's head 'well supported' over the sink and rinse thoroughly with a gentle spray or two or three cupfuls of clean water.

Once baby has graduated to a big bath, you can try giving the shampoo at the end of the bath - right in the bath. Since most babies (and young children) don't like to put their heads back for a shampoo - it makes them feel too vulnerable and often leads to tears and, later, tantrums - use a spray nozzle if your bath has one, and if your child doesn't find it too frightening. A specially designed *baby shampoo visor* (available from chemists and from mail-order or on-line catalogues) that guards the eyes from flowing water and soap, but leaves the hair exposed for washing, is ideal if your child will wear it - some won't. If your baby resists both sprays and visors, you can continue shampooing (or at least rinsing, after doing the lathering in the bath) at the sink until he or she is more cooperative in the bath. Though the process isn't perfect and it can grow awkward as the child grows larger), it's quick and consequently minimizes the period of suffering for both of you.

## BABY IN BATH

A baby is ready for a bath as soon as both umbilical cord stump and *circumcision*, if any, are healed. If baby doesn't seem to like being in the water, go back to sponge baths for a few days before trying again. Be sure the water temperature is comfortable and that baby is held firmly to combat any reflexive fear of falling.

1. Select a site for the portable baby bath. The kitchen or bathroom sink or counter or *the big bath* (though the maneuvering involved when bathing a tiny baby while bending and stretching over a bath can be tricky) are all good candidates. Be sure you will be comfortable and have plenty of room for the bath and bath paraphernalia. The first couple of times you give a bath, you might want to omit the soap - wet babies are always slippery, but soapy-wet babies are extra slippery.

2. Have the entire *baby bath supply* ready before undressing baby and filling the bath:

- bath, basin or sink scrubbed and ready to fill
- baby soap and shampoo, if you use it
- Two flannels (one will do if you use your hand for soaping).
- Sterile cotton wool balls for cleaning the eyes.
- *baby bath towel*, preferably with a *hooded baby bath towel*
- clean nappy and clothing
- ointment or cream for nappy rash, if needed

3. Run water into the baby bath (enough so that part of baby's body is in the water but not too much); test with your elbow to be sure that the *baby bath temperature* is comfortable. Never run the water with baby in the bath because a sudden temperature change might occur. Don't add baby soap or bubble bath to the water, as these can be drying to baby's skin.

4. Undress baby completely.

5. Gradually slip *baby in the bath tub*, talking in soothing and reassuring tones to minimize fear, and holding on securely to prevent a startle reflex. Support the neck and head with one hand unless the bath has built-in support, or if your baby seems to prefer your arms to the bath's support, until good head control develops. Hold baby securely in a semi-reclining position slipping under suddenly could provide a bad scare.

6. With your free hand, wash baby working from the cleanest to the dirtiest areas. First, using a sterile cotton wool ball moistened in warm water, clean baby's eyes, wiping gently from the nose outwards. Use a fresh ball for each eye. Then wash face, outer ears and neck. Though soap won't usually be necessary elsewhere every day (unless your baby tends to have all over 'accidents'), do use it on hands and the nappy area daily. Use it every couple of days on arms, neck, legs and abdomen as long as baby's skin doesn't seem dry - less often if it does. Apply soap with your hand or with a flannel. When you've taken care of baby's front parts, turn him or her over your arm to wash back and buttocks.

7. Rinse baby thoroughly with a fresh flannel.

8. Once or twice a week, wash baby's scalp, using mild baby soap or baby shampoo. Rinse very thoroughly and towel-dry gently.

| 9. Wrap baby in a towel, pat dry and dress.

## **DRESSING UP BABY**

With floppy arms, stubbornly curled up legs, a head that invariably seems larger than the openings provided by most baby clothes, and an active dislike for being naked, an infant can be a challenge to dress and undress. But there are ways of making these daily tasks less of a chore for both of you:

1. Select clothes with easy-on, easy-off features in mind. Wide neck openings or necks with popper closings are best. Poppers or a zipper at the crotch make dressing and nappy changes easier. Sleeves should be fairly loose, and a minimum of fastening (particularly up the back) should be necessary. Clothes made of stretch or knit fabrics are often easier to put on than stiff garments with less give.

2. Make changes only when necessary. If you find the odor from frequent spit-ups offensive, sponge the spots lightly with a baby wipe rather than changing outfits every time baby has a productive burp. Or try guarding against such incidents by putting a large bib on baby during and after feedings.

3. *Dress baby* on a flat surface, such as a *baby dressing table*, bed or cot mattress. And have some entertainment available.

4. Consider dressing time a social time. Light, cheerful conversation (a running commentary on what you're doing, for instance) can help distract baby from the discomforts and indignities of being dressed and make cooperation more likely. Making a learning game out of pulling on clothes will team distraction with stimulation. And punctuating your commentary with loud kisses (a smooch for each adorable hand and foot as it appears from the sleeve or trouser leg) can add to the fun for both of you.

5. Stretch neck openings with your hands before attempting to get baby into a garment. Ease, rather than tug, them on and off. Keeping the opening as wide as possible in the process and trying to avoid snagging the ears or nose. Turn the split second during which baby's head is covered, which might otherwise be scary or uncomfortable, into a game of peek-a-boo (Where is Mommy? Here she is!' and then, as baby gets old enough to realize that he or she is equally invisible to you. 'Where is Daniella? Here she is!').

6. Try to reach into sleeves and pull baby's hands through rather than trying to shove rubbery little arms into limp cylinders of cloth. A game here, too ('Where is Brandon's hand? Here it is'). Will help distract and educate when baby's hands temporarily disappear.

7. When pulling a zip up or down, draw the garment away from baby's body to avoid pinching tender skin.

<http://www.guide-to-baby-needs.com/index.html>