



## PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

### Umbilical Cord, Oozing

#### Why is the umbilical cord oozing?

If the umbilicus (navel) is oozing or moist or has some dried pus on the surface, your baby probably has a mild infection from surface bacteria. It usually can be cleared up fairly quickly. Infection of the umbilicus must be treated with care because of the risk of spread to the liver or the abdomen.

Oozing can happen after the cord has already fallen off, but more often the cord is still attached.

#### How can I take care of my child?

- **Cleansing the umbilicus** Six times a day, clean the area with rubbing alcohol for several minutes. Use a cotton swab and remove all dried pus or debris. The umbilical area does not have any sensation, so the alcohol won't sting. If the cord is still present, clean underneath it by lifting it up. If the cord has fallen off, pour some alcohol into the depression and remove it after 2 or 3 minutes. It takes that long to kill bacteria. Air exposure and dryness help healing, so be sure to keep the diaper folded down below the cord area. Although using alcohol can delay the separation of the cord by 1 or 2 days, it does prevent cord infections, and that's what is most important.
- **Common mistakes in the treatment of oozing umbilical cord** Do not put talcum powder on the umbilicus; it can cause irritation and tissue reaction. Ointments should be avoided, because they delay drying and healing.

#### When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- Red streaks develop on the normal skin surrounding the navel.
- Pimples or blisters appear around the navel.
- Your baby's rectal temperature is over 100.4°F (38.0°C) or under 97.5°F (36.8°C).
- Your baby acts sick.

Call during office hours if:

- The umbilical area is not completely dry and clean after 2 days of this treatment.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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Published by McKesson Corporation.

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**Pediatric Advisor**

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Reviewed 9 June 2008