



Care of the Umbilical Cord ~ The stub of the umbilical cord is white, translucent and shiny right after birth. If it was painted with antibacterial dye, it may look blue and quickly will begin to dry up and shrink. Keep the stump of the umbilical cord clean and dry as it shrivels and, within a few weeks, eventually falls off. At each diaper change, use a cotton swab (soaked in rubbing alcohol and then squeezed) to clean away the wet, sticky material that sometimes collects where the base of the stump meets the skin. This will help dry the cord, as will exposing it to air. Also, keep the diaper folded below the cord to keep urine from soaking it. You may notice a few drops of blood on the diaper around the time the stump falls off; this is normal. If the stump becomes infected; however, it will require medical treatment, so alert your pediatrician if you notice any of these signs of infection.

- Pus at the base of the cord
- Red skin around the base of cord
- Crying when you touch the cord or the skin next to it. (If your baby cries when the alcohol is applied, that is normal, because it's cold, but crying at the touch of your finger is not.)

Umbilical Granuloma ~ Occasionally, after the umbilical cord has fallen off, the remaining area will continue to be moist and may swell slightly. This is called an umbilical granuloma. If it is small, your pediatrician will treat it by applying a drying medication called silver nitrate. If this is not successful, or if the area continues to enlarge or ooze, it may have to be tied off and surgically removed. This is a minor procedure that does not require anesthetic or a hospital stay.

Umbilical Hernia ~ If your baby's umbilical cord seems to push outward when he cries, he may have an umbilical hernia. This is a small hole in the muscular part of the abdominal wall that allows tissue to bulge out when there's pressure inside the abdomen (for example, when the baby cries). This is not a serious condition, and it usually heals by itself in the first 12 to 18 months. (It takes longer to heal in African-American babies.) In the unlikely event that it doesn't, the hole may need to be surgically closed.

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