

# Umbilical Cord Care

Keeping the umbilical cord clean and dry until it detaches from your infant's belly button roughly 2 weeks after leaving the newborn nursery is the most important thing to remember about the care of the umbilical cord.

Some hospitals may differ in the specific instructions given to parents regarding cord care prior to discharge, but all emphasize keeping the cord clean and dry. There are a few things that you may do to help.

- 1) Keep the cord exposed to open air (or only light clothing) with the diaper turned down.
- 2) Clean the cord with either water or alcohol (if recommended by your newborn nursery).
- 3) For soiling with stool or urine, clean the umbilical cord with water only.

After 2-3 weeks, the cord will separate from the belly button and will occasionally be associated with minor crusted blood or discharge. Continue to give your newborn sponge baths only until the cord has completely separated and the weepy appearance has resolved (usually in 2-3 days).

## When to call the doctor:

- If your infant's belly button appears very red or tender.
- If your infant has pus draining from the umbilical cord.
- If the umbilical cord has a foul odor.
- If your infant has bleeding from the umbilical cord that is more than smears or dry, crusted patches.
- If your infant's belly button continues to ooze more than 2-3 days after the umbilical cord has completely separated.
- If your infant develops a rectal temperature greater than 100.4 degrees.



303 South 4th Street  
Danville, Kentucky 40422  
Phone 859•236•1080  
Phone 859•236•1089  
Fax 859•236•1862  
[www.danvillepediatrics.com](http://www.danvillepediatrics.com)

**Danville**  
**Pediatrics**<sup>SM</sup>  
and Primary Care