

Umbilical cord care

What's the purpose of the umbilical cord?

Babies receive nourishment and oxygen in the womb through the placenta, which is connected to the inner wall of the mother's uterus. The placenta is connected to the baby by the umbilical cord through an opening in the baby's stomach. After the baby is born, the umbilical cord is clamped and cut close to the body in a painless procedure, leaving an umbilical stump.

Does the stump require special care?

- The baby's umbilical cord stump will fall off in seven to 10 days. Until that happens, it must be kept clean and dry.
- Fold the baby's diaper below the stump so it's exposed to the air and not to urine. When the stump falls off, you may detect a little blood on the diaper. This is normal.
- While waiting for the cord to heal, avoid tub baths until the area heals completely.

What are the signs of infection?

You should call your doctor if:

- The cord stump doesn't fall off in two weeks.
- The cord stump smells bad.
- There is drainage from the bottom of the cord stump.
- The naval and the surrounding area become swollen or red.
- Your child develops a fever or appears unwell.