



Healthy Skin Starts with You!

Having spina bifida means that your child has more challenges than other children. The good news is we're here to help.

Your child may have limited feeling in his or her legs and might not be able to feel a cut or a sore. That means your child might not cry to tell you he or she is hurt. You'll be the one checking your child's skin each day for problems.

The best way to take care of your child's skin is by finding the source of the problem and removing it. Talk to your child's healthcare professional about your child's specific risks for skin problems. As your child gets older, teach him or her how to care for their own skin.

Call your child's spina bifida clinic immediately if:

- Your child's skin color changes.
- Your child's skin turns darker and doesn't return to its normal color in 15 minutes.



THIS PROGRAM MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH AN UNRESTRICTED EDUCATIONAL GRANT FROM SMITH & NEPHEW.



[HTTP://SPINABIFIDAASSOCIATION.ORG/RESOURCES/DIDYOULOOK](http://spinabifidaassociation.org/resources/didyoulook)

SUPPORTED IN PART BY CDC'S NATIONAL CENTER ON BIRTH DEFECTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Did You Look?

Healthy Skin Starts with You!

Care for **Infants & Toddlers** with Spina Bifida





Did You Look?

Moisture.

Your child can develop skin problems any time his or her skin gets wet and stays wet. For babies and toddlers, look for wetness and change your child's diaper as soon as needed to avoid irritation. Check your child's skin at each diaper change.

Areas around the upper thighs and bottom are the most common places for skin problems to develop from too much moisture.

Friction.

Any time your child's skin comes in contact with a rough surface, your child could get cut, scraped, or bruised. Don't let him or her play on rough surfaces without protecting their skin, especially when your child is beginning to crawl.

Repeated rubbing—even against a smooth surface—can also damage your child's skin. When your child begins to walk and swim, make sure he or she is wearing shoes.

Pressure.

Sores can develop in parts of the body that are constantly pressed or squeezed.

A general rule is to watch areas where the bones are right under the skin and there's constant pressure, like the bottom, ankles, and toes. Make sure your child's shoes fit correctly and are not rubbing.

Other places to check are:

- The skin around your child's diaper elastic—or any clothing with elastic such as socks, pants, a bathing suit, and coat sleeves.
- The skin underneath your child's braces or under the edges of a cast.
- The skin underneath snaps, zippers, buttons, or other fasteners.

Heat.

Hot surfaces and other direct sources of heat can burn your child's skin. Since your child may have limited feeling in the legs, he or she may not be able to feel their skin burning so they won't be able to tell you they're hurt. Putting your child in bath water that is too hot can scald your child's skin.

Watch out for these other sources of heat:

- Electric blankets, heating pads
- Hot water
- Hot sand at the beach
- Direct sun/sunburn
- Car seats
- Outdoor swings/playground equipment, outdoor furniture
- Radiators, space heaters
- Indoor and outdoor fires
- Candles and holiday decorations
- Hot surfaces in the kitchen

Protecting Your Child's Skin

- Make sure your child's braces and shoes fit properly, without any rubbing.
- Test surfaces for heat and roughness before placing your child on them.
- Use only mild soap when bathing your child.
- Apply moisturizer on your child's dry skin.
- Apply rash lotion (barrier cream) on moist areas of your child's skin. This can be the same cream you use for diaper rash.
- Limit your child's time in direct sunlight. Put a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing on your child. Apply plenty of sunscreen.
- Change your child's clothes, diapers, and sheets every time they get wet.