Newborns skin care

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Although it looks similar, baby skin is significantly different than the skin of adults, which is why it requires special care when creams, oils and lotions are applied.

Baby skin is 40% thinner than the skin of adults, which is why skin injuries are very often and can happen with a simple bandaid peel-off. The fact that the skin surface in newborns is five times larger in relation to it's body mass than in adults means much greater resorption of all the substances which are applied on the skin and the ability to get dehydrated much more easily. Newborns skin has a primary function as a mechanical barrier to the outside world. It is the first line of defense from different viruses, bacteria and electrolyte loss.

Baby baths

The water environment surrounding a baby in the mothers womb during pregnancy gives the skin a base ph value and thus completely vulnerable to bacteria and viruses. After the birth, there is a vernix on the baby's skin. A vernix is a fat substance which is formed in the 36-th week of the intrauterine development of a baby. The vernix allows a baby to contain it's moisture and it increases its resistance to chemical substances and microorganisms. It is one of the reasons why you will never have your newborn properly bathed, but a bit oily. Every baby bath with shampoos, reduces the acidity of the skin and it changes it's ph value.

During it's first year the newborn tries to convert it's base skin into an acidic environment. Skin's ph acidity is the basic skin defense from bacteria. Everyday use of cleansers and soaps for a few hours turns the acidic environment into base one, while this process takes less than an hour in adults. That's why it is very important not to bathe the baby every day with soaps and shampoos during the first year. The bathing products should have an acidity under 5.5 to not make the baby susceptible to infections.

Substances for child skin care

Substances which have always been considered safe, when applied to large surfaces of a newborn's skin can have effect on the whole organism.

- Using povidone-iodine can inhibit the work of the thyroid gland.
- Boric acid used as a mild antiseptic, if applied to most of the body, which was once common because it was found in powders and baby creams, can lead to sickness and vomiting and even epileptic seizures.
- Neomycin can lead to hearing loss.
- Benzocaine causes methemoglobinemia.
- Highly potent corticosteroid creams cause skin atrophy.

Organic and natural products may be more attractive due to their name but in certain situations they have a completely adverse effect.

- Rinsing the skin with camomile is considered suitable for the care of sensitive skin but camomile is of the most common allergens and it makes newborn skin even more dry.
- Olive oil which is very often the base of many natural products actually disrupts the skin barrier, unlike sunflower oil which is very beneficial to the skin.

What is important to understand is that each of these substances can be safely used when applied to small surfaces and in small doses, definitely significantly less than in grownups. Later exposure of newborn skin to chemical substances reduces the possibility of developing the organisms hypersensitivity to them.