Skin care in the well term newborn: two systematic reviews

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CRD summary
This review aimed to evaluate the use of soaps and detergents, and the consequences of using emollients, lotions and moisturisers for dry skin, on the well term baby. No prospective studies met the inclusion criteria. Since the search was limited to articles published in English, it is possible that relevant studies may have been missed.

Authors' objectives
This paper reported on two systematic reviews with the following objectives: to determine whether the use of soaps and detergents in bath water was associated with the development of dry, cracked or flaking skin in the perinatal period for the well term baby; to determine the short-term and long-term consequences of using emollients, lotions and moisturisers for dry skin for the well term baby.

Searching
MEDLINE (1966 to 2002), CINAHL (1982 to 2002), AMED (1985 to 2002), the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (Issue 4, 2002), the Cochrane CENTRAL Register (Issue 4, 2002), and the UK National Research Register were searched for publications in English; search terms were reported. An update search was performed in 2004. MIRIAD (1991 to 2003) and Paediatric Dermatology journal (1999 to 2003) were also searched. Experts were contacted and requests for information were posted on topic-specific electronic lists.

Study selection

Study designs of evaluations included in the review
Prospective research studies were eligible for inclusion.

Specific interventions included in the review
Inclusion criteria were defined by the documented search strategy. To be eligible for inclusion in the first review, studies had to evaluate the use of soaps and detergents in bath water. To be eligible for inclusion in the second review, studies had to evaluate the use of oils, emollients, Vaseline, petroleum jelly, moisturiser, lotion, cream or E45 aqueous cream.

Participants included in the review
Studies of well newborns that were born after 37 weeks' gestation were eligible for inclusion.

Outcomes assessed in the review
Inclusion criteria were defined by the documented search strategy. To be eligible for inclusion in the first review, studies had to report the occurrence of dry, flaky, peeling or cracked skin. No explicit inclusion criteria were reported for the second review.

How were decisions on the relevance of primary studies made?
Two independent reviewers determined the eligibility of papers identified by the initial search and a third reviewer resolved any disagreements. One author determined the eligibility of papers identified by the update search.

Assessment of study quality
The authors did not state that they planned to assess validity.

No studies met the inclusion criteria, therefore no validity assessment was performed.

Data extraction
The authors did not state what data extraction was planned, or how many reviewers were to perform the data extraction. No studies met the inclusion criteria, therefore no data extraction was performed.
Methods of synthesis
How were the studies combined?
No studies met the inclusion criteria, therefore no synthesis of the studies was performed.

How were differences between studies investigated?
No studies met the inclusion criteria.

Results of the review
No studies met the inclusion criteria.

No studies met the inclusion criteria.

Authors' conclusions
No prospective studies of research in skin care of the full-term newborn were found. Practitioners need to be aware that outcomes related to the use of soaps, detergents, emollients and lotions on the term neonate have not been formally investigated

CRD commentary
This review addressed two research questions. The inclusion criteria were implied by a detailed search strategy. Several relevant sources were searched for relevant studies and attempts were made to limit publication bias. However, the restriction to only publications in English meant that relevant data might have been missed. Methods were used to minimise reviewer error and bias in the selection of studies for inclusion. No details of a planned validity assessment or methods of data extraction were reported; given the absence of eligible studies, these factors will not impact on the authors' conclusion. In summary, the authors' somewhat broad search was likely to have identified most studies in English, but it is possible that studies published in other languages might have been overlooked.

Implications of the review for practice and research
Practice: The authors did not state any implications for practice.

Research: The authors stated that the questions posed by this review required long-term follow-up using large, well-designed prospective studies that assessed the impact of practices in the first few days and weeks after birth, and in the longer term.

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This is a critical abstract of a systematic review that meets the criteria for inclusion on DARE. Each critical abstract contains a brief summary of the review methods, results and conclusions followed by a detailed critical assessment on the reliability of the review and the conclusions drawn.