

lotions are not used because they alter the acid mantle, thus providing a medium for bacterial growth. Talcum powder has the added risk of aspiration if it is applied too close to the infant's face. Parents should be involved in a discussion regarding the newborn's bath at home. It is recommended that for the first 2 to 4 weeks the infant be bathed no more than two or three times per week with a plain warm sponge bath. This practice helps maintain the integrity of the newborn's skin and allows time for the umbilical cord to completely dry. Routine daily soap bathing for newborns is no longer recommended.

## Care of the Umbilicus

Because the umbilical stump is an excellent medium for bacterial growth, various methods of cord care have been practiced to prevent infection. Some methods popular in the past include the use of an antimicrobial agent (such as, bacitracin or triple dye) and agents (such as alcohol or povidone iodine). The use of antiseptic agents has been shown to prolong cord drying and separation ([Zupan, Garner, and Omari, 2004](#)). A Cochrane review of 21 studies found no significant difference between cords treated with antiseptics compared with dry cord care or placebo; there were no reported systemic infections or deaths, and a trend toward reduced colonization was found in cords treated with antiseptics ([Zupan, Garner, and Omari, 2004](#)). Recommendations for cord care by the [Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing \(2013\)](#) include cleaning the umbilical cord initially with sterile water or a neutral pH cleanser and then subsequently cleaning the cord with water.

Nurses working in neonatal care must carefully evaluate the available studies and compare the risks and benefits regarding the method of cord care within their own population of newborns and families. Regardless of the method used, nurses must include cord care teaching in the discharge planning, because it has been demonstrated to be a concern for parents after discharge to the home. Particularly in the developing world, infants may encounter increased risk of potentially life-threatening sepsis; thus, antimicrobial treatment may be appropriate in some settings ([Mullany, Darmstadt, Katz, et al, 2009](#)).

The diaper is folded in front below the cord to avoid irritation