



Ask Doctor Dr Karuhanga



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Does pubic hair at delivery pose any risk to the baby?

My sister recently gave birth to a baby who had scratch-like marks all over the body. We were concerned and confused about what could have caused them. Could this have happened because she did not shave before delivery?
Anonymous

Dear Anonymous,

Women may choose to shave their pubic hair before delivery to feel cleaner and to make it easier to clean up blood and other fluids after giving birth. Some may also shave to avoid potential embarrassment in front of the medical staff. However, shaving does not necessarily prevent infections that can occur from cuts in the pubic area or assist in the delivery process.

While babies can be born with scratch-like marks due to pressure and friction while passing through the birth canal (often seen on their face, head, or scalp), pubic hair does not contribute to these scratches. Therefore, shaving the pubic area is discouraged as it can damage the skin, increasing the risk of infection.



Post-mature babies, born after 42 weeks of gestation, may have dry, peeling skin and overgrown nails, which can lead to scratches on the baby's skin while still in the womb. These markings are usually temporary and typically heal or disappear within one to two weeks. However, it is important to trim the long nails and address any bruising.

In some cases, skin irritation in the womb may lead to scratching, but because the nails are underdeveloped (unless the baby is post-mature), scratch marks do not occur frequently. Additionally, birthmarks may sometimes be mistaken for scratch marks, so a doctor needs to provide an appropriate diagnosis and treatment for the baby.