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Umbilical skin

Here's something else for you to measure in the newborn. The length of the skin of the umbilicus is slightly (2 or 3 mm) greater on the cranial surface than on the caudal. A paper from the Mayo clinic (Aengus S O'Marcaigh and colleagues, *Pediatrics* 1992; 90: 47-9) gives a normal range for cranial surface umbilical skin length measured from the junction of the abdominal wall and umbilicus to the junction of umbilical skin and gelatinous cord with gentle traction on the cord. In 104 babies of between 36 and 43 weeks' gestation and 2235 to 5490 g birth weight this measurement was not dependant on sex, gestation, weight, or body length. It did, however, slowly decrease between birth and 48 hours of age after which it remained constant up to 90 hours. Mean cranial surface umbilical skin length (95% confidence intervals) at birth was 13.5 mm (7.5 to 20.0) and at 48 hours 8.7 mm (2.5 to 16.0).

Why would you wish to measure umbilical skin length? It might help in the diagnosis of several dysmorphic syndromes especially Rieger's syndrome (autosomal dominant, goniodysgenesis, mid-face hypoplasia, variable hypodontia). Other syndromes with abnormal umbilical morphology include Aarskog's syndrome (X linked recessive, small stature, unusual facies, genital anomalies) and Robinow's syndrome (autosomal dominant, possibly recessive in some, 'fetal face', short forearms, genital hypoplasia, growth deficiency).

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