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**New Mothers Beware:
Post Partem Hair Loss May Pose Risk to
Babies' Toes and Extremities**

New York, NY March 17, 2003- The hair loss that many women have after giving birth can be more than a nuisance, occasionally, those shed hairs can get wrapped around baby's toes and extremities creating a "tourniquet" that cuts off the circulation. "The condition is not very common, and the exact incidence is not known," says **Dr. Elliot Duboys a board certified Long Island Plastic and reconstructive surgeon.** Dr. Duboys had a recent incident where he was called to save an infant's penis that had become nearly strangled by his mother's hair. He has also been called upon to save an infant's toe that would otherwise have become strangled by hair, thus necessitating amputation. Although this is a little known occurrence, it is one that most pediatricians and emergency room physicians will see at least once in their careers.

As Dr. Duboys explains, "the condition, referred to as toe tourniquet syndrome, occurs when a loose hair or thread becomes so tightly wrapped around a baby's toes that pain, swelling and discoloration occur. Fingers can also get wrapped up, but the toes are most often the victim. And when babies are affected, it's usually at an age when their mothers' post-delivery hair loss is at its peak--around four months after the birth."

The March issue of the journal Pediatrics illustrates a 3-month-old baby who had become excessively "fussy," which was at first attributed to run-of-the-mill gas. Only during the baby's bath two days later was it discovered that three of his toes were "entrapped" by a hair. One of the toes was swollen, purple and tender to the touch. At the time, his mother was going through massive postpartum hair loss. In this instance the doctor needed only to remove the hair and treat the wounds with a topical antibiotic. In other cases, though, the problem has been known to lead to permanent tissue damage, and even loss of the appendage, if not treated promptly. That makes preventing the problem key, according to Dr. Duboys. He states that, "the key to prevention is the regular inspection of a baby's toes, which is something that most parents don't think of, and most pediatricians don't advise. I would make it a point to inspect at least twice a day." Mothers with long hair need to be especially vigilant. And besides checking babies' toes, he said, it's "just as important" to turn babies' footed clothing inside-out to check for stray hairs.

- Pictures are available in PDF format illustrating infants whom Dr. Duboys has performed surgery on.

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