

## Cradle Cap

Cradle cap, or infantile seborrheic dermatitis, (seb o RE ik der mah TI tis) is a condition that causes flaky, dry patches on the skin of your baby's scalp. Cradle cap is most common in newborns. It does not spread to others and probably doesn't bother your baby. In most cases the condition isn't itchy. You may also see it on your baby's ears, eyelids or nose.

### Signs and Symptoms

Common signs of cradle cap include:

- Patches of scaly skin or crusts on the baby's scalp
- Greasy skin covered with flaky white or yellow scales
- Skin flakes or dandruff
- Mild redness

### Causes

The exact cause of cradle cap is not known. One possible cause may be related to hormones that pass from the mother to baby before birth. The hormones may cause too much oil in the oil glands and hair follicles. Another cause may be a fungus that grows in the oil glands.

### Treatment

Medical care is usually not needed to treat cradle cap. It clears on its own within a few months. During that time wash your baby's hair or scalp once a day with mild baby shampoo. Home remedies listed below can help you control cradle cap.

- Gently rub your baby's scalp with your fingers or a washcloth to loosen the crust
- Wash his or her hair once a day with mild baby shampoo.
- If the patches don't loosen easily, rub petroleum jelly or a few drops of mineral oil on his scalp. Let it soak into the patches for a few minutes. Brush and shampoo his hair to get out the oil. If you leave the oil in your baby's hair, the cradle cap may get worse.
- Once the scaly patches are gone, wash his hair every few days to prevent scaly buildup.

### When to Call the Doctor

Call your baby's doctor if:

- The cradle cap does not go away after treating it at home.
- The patches spread to your baby's face or body.

The doctor may suggest a stronger shampoo, such as an adult dandruff shampoo to help get rid of the scaly patches. He may also advise using hydrocortisone (hi dro KOR ti sone) cream to help soothe red or swollen areas.



**Picture 1** Cradle Cap on a baby's scalp.