

Cradle Cap

Cradle cap is the greasy, yellow scaly patches that sometimes appear on the scalps of young babies. It is common, harmless and doesn't usually itch or cause discomfort. The scales flake and may make the affected skin look red. Sometimes the hair will come away with the flakes, but it will grow back. It usually appears in babies in the first two months and clears up without treatment within weeks to a few months.



Cradle cap is not contagious and is not caused by poor hygiene or an allergy.

It is a type of seborrhoeic dermatitis, a common irritation that affects oily skin in children and adults. It usually occurs on the scalp but can also affect the face, ears, neck, nappy area and armpits, and behind the knees.

Picture courtesy of NHS Choices

Managing your condition

Do not pick at the scales as this can cause an infection. Most cases of cradle cap clear up on their own without the need for treatment within weeks to a few months.

Tips to help reduce the build-up of scales on the scalp:

- regular washing of the scalp with a baby shampoo, followed by gentle brushing with a soft brush to loosen scales.
- soften the scales with baby oil first, followed by gentle brushing, and then wash off with baby shampoo.
- soak the crusts overnight with white petroleum jelly, or vegetable or olive oil, and shampoo in the morning.

How do I treat?

If you have tried the tips above and these haven't worked you may want to speak to your pharmacist, midwife or Health Visitor. They may advise the use of a greasy emollient or soap substitute, such as emulsifying ointment.

When should I seek advice?

There is usually no need to see your GP if your baby has cradle cap. However, you may want to ask them for advice if there is swelling to the scalp or if the cradle cap spreads to other parts of the body.

More information is available at the following websites

- NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk
- Stay Well Derbyshire – www.derbyandderbyshireccg.nhs.uk/staywellderbyshire/
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice