

Seborrheic Dermatitis (Cradle Cap or Dandruff)

What is seborrheic dermatitis?

This is a common skin condition. In infants it is called cradle cap. In teens it is known as dandruff. The skin may look greasy, scaly and flaky, or there may be a red, itchy rash. It is most common on the head, but can also affect the belly button (navel), buttocks, underarms, breasts and groin. The exact cause is not known. It may be related to oil glands, friction and moisture.

This condition is diagnosed in a physical exam.

How will it affect my child?

With infants, it often starts with a scaly irritation or rash. It is most common on the scalp or in the diaper area. It may spread to the forehead, ears, eyebrows, nose, back of the head, or the middle of the chest. Sometimes it clears up in a few weeks, but it can last up to one year old. Mild scales on the scalp may be seen through the preschool years. Some infants with this condition will develop another skin problem called eczema or atopic dermatitis.

As teens and adults, it looks like dry, fine, flaky skin on the scalp. It may also appear on the face. Skin scaling and irritation may appear between the eyebrows, forehead, and upper lip or around the ears.



How is it treated?

Treatment may help control cradle cap and dandruff. There is no cure and no way to prevent it from starting in new areas.

- **Cradle cap.** Wash the scalp daily or every other day with a gentle shampoo. A medicated shampoo may be prescribed. Use a thin layer of oil such as mineral oil, baby oil or olive oil to remove thick, stuck-on scales. Put the oil on the scalp and use a soft toothbrush to gently massage the scalp.
- **Dandruff.** Teens may be told to use an antiseborrheic shampoo. These include: tar - shampoo, tea tree oil shampoo and other medicated shampoos. If scales are very thick, massage mineral oil or P&S™ liquid into the scalp and leave it on overnight. The scales can be removed with a soft brush. Shampoo the hair after brushing.

A corticosteroid may be prescribed. It may be:

- A lotion, solution, or oil for the scalp
- An ointment to go on the skin for other body areas.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.