

Section 4:

Smooth As A Baby's Bottom

Head To Toe But Not Below: All But The Diaper Rash

Babies can get pretty spotty at about the 1-2 month mark! All of a sudden parents are putting their cameras on the shelf and lubing the kid up with various creams... It will be ok. Most newborn rashes are benign, but can be bright red, raw and downright unattractive. Rashes often look worse when babies are raging mad or hot or after a bath.

Neonatal acne is usually found in and around the face, neck, back & chest. They are small splotchy red dots and pimples. Although not related to adult acne, some studies have shown that small amounts of benzoyl peroxide may help. Applying this to the face in small amounts and washing it off with a warm washcloth once a day can help clear up the complexion. This is not a permanent solution. If left alone this type of rash will go away on its own by 3-4months.

Greasy, red, yellow scale on the scalp, eyebrows, cheeks, chest and ears is seborrhea (Also known as cradle cap). When moderate to severe, adding baby oil, combing out the scale where able, and washing with a mild cleanser (I like Cetaphil) helps keep it at bay. Then adding a moisturizing cream over it may help soften up the area. Cetaphil cream works well. If severe, sometimes a topical steroid or antibiotics may be needed. These would be prescribed by your baby's doctor. Some over-the-counter adult dandruff shampoos (ie: containing selenium sulfide) may be used a couple of times per week for several weeks. Avoid getting these types of shampoos into baby's eyes because they can sting.

Red, pinpoint or patchy scaly, rough areas on the extremities, torso or cheeks may be eczema (atopic dermatitis). The key to managing this is hydrating the skin. Bathing everyday is fine as long as you apply an emollient cream immediately afterward. You may try applying a petroleum jelly-based emollient or hydrating cream on to partially wet

skin (only pat-dry wet skin before applying). When these areas are red and flared-up, use a low potency steroid cream like 0.5 or 1 percent hydrocortisone twice a day for 3-5 days until the area looks rough but not red any longer. If it does not improve, you should see your pediatrician. Sometimes kids can have food allergies that cause their eczema to get worse. Pay attention as you feed/introduce food to your child.

There are other rashes like prickly heat rash (pinpoint, and around the neck & face area), viral rashes, and others that come and go and offer no discomfort or other signs of illness to the child. You can probably just watch these rashes for a couple of weeks without doing anything at all.

Rashes are *rarely* emergencies. However, if your child has any of the following in addition to the rash, he should be seen by his doctor: A fever, irritability that is not easily consoled, blistery or fluid-filled rash, a rash that is pinpoint but does not disappear then reappear when pressed on, bruising, bleeding, pus, red streaks, swelling, blisters on mouth, nose or around the eyes.

Ring Around The Chomper: Chapped Cheeks and Spotty Mouth

After baby grows up a little and sheds the normal newborn rashes, he may develop rough red patches on his sensitive little cheeks and a red ring around his mouth. This is especially common in the wintertime, or if your baby uses a pacifier regularly. Other causes for this are drooling and rubbing the face in it, which tends to start around 4 months (drooling) and 6 months (rolling over and rubbing his face in it). As long as the area is not yellow or weeping clear or murky fluid, then this problem can be remedied at home. Lube him up with a petroleum jelly every 1-2hrs. If his face is not shiny, then it's time to reapply!

Bottom's Up: Red & Raw

Diaper rashes can be an ongoing and frustrating problem. Most occur because the area is exposed to recurrent moisture. Germs such as yeast,

bacteria and viruses can grow on warm, wet skin. Also, the chemical reaction from excretion irritants can wreak havoc on your little one's smooth dermis. Most of the time, the cause is not as important because the initial treatment is the same.

The most important thing to remember is to keep the area as dry as possible. Frequent (at least every 2-3hrs) diaper changes help. Choose a diaper that is not irritating to baby. There are some cloth diaper variants out there that can be used for ultra-sensitive skin. Many of these can be ordered on the internet. During diaper changes, use a wet washcloth or mild wipe. Then use the new, unused diaper to fan the buttocks area. Be sure to air out between the butt folds, thigh folds and scrotum. Finally, apply the diaper cream. Any cream with zinc oxide and petrolatum is fine. If you apply a barrier cream over damp skin, then you'll lock in moisture and create a perfect home for germs and irritation. These steps can be applied even when your baby's bottom is looking pristine.

When baby has an angry red bottom, the steps described earlier may help, but will help, but you may need to try some different creams as well. Mixing a petroleum emollient in a one-to-one ratio with liquid antacid can neutralize the acidity of bowel movements and provide some relief. Plain old Vitamin E cream can provide some cool relief for the raw and painful bottom that hates to be wiped. Clotrimazole (yeast cream, over-the counter) can help with those very red rashes that also seem to have little red dots or pimples scattered about. There are other creams at large superstores that may contain an ingredient named allantoin that can also help heal raw skin.

Some other possible causes of a diaper rash can be acidic baby foods (i.e. tomato-based, apple sauce) and certain antibiotics (i.e. cephalosporins). There is no need to stop an antibiotic because of just a diaper rash. Just treat the rash. However, You may want to try and cut back on the offending food if you think that may be the cause.

If the area is infected with bacteria or viruses, the rash will not usually get better with the application of creams. You should bring baby to her doctor so she can tell you if an antibiotic is needed. Sometimes hand-foot-mouth disease can present in the buttocks area and mimic a yeast rash. Strep bacteria can infect the area around the anus. This tends to look like a bright red thick ring around the anal opening. Also, some potentially chronic diseases can present with persistent diaper rash, so be sure and get a second opinion if the routine things do not work.