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Rashes of Infancy

Many infants suffer from occasional mild breakouts. These are three of the most common kinds.

BABY ACNE

Babies often get acne, usually after the second week of life. It usually peaks around the third week and clears up within a month or six weeks.

What it looks like: Tiny white bumps or yellow spots across the tip of the nose or chin, sometimes on the shoulders. The bumps look raised but feel almost flat and smooth.

Causes: Just as in adolescence, hormones are to blame. In this case, however, it's the mother's hormones--- still circulating in her baby's system---that cause the problem.

Treatment: Most baby acne will go away by itself if you leave it alone. Avoid touching or squeezing the pimples or applying any lotions or creams. Wash occasionally with gentle soap.

CRADLE CAP

Although the condition can look unsightly, it's very common and no cause for concern.

What it looks like: Cradle cap looks like crusty, scaly patches on your newborn's scalp and sometimes on the forehead.

Causes: It's thought to be a result of hormonal changes that stimulate secretions from the oil glands.

Treatment: Rub a mild mineral oil into your baby's scalp and wash daily with a gentle baby shampoo. Consult a pediatrician if the condition persists, worsens, or spreads.

ECZEMA

Unlike some rashes that look worse than they feel, eczema is actually quite uncomfortable and causes a great deal of itching. Indeed, some newborns and young babies may try to relieve the itch by rubbing up against things.

What it looks like: Dry, crusting red patches on the cheeks, back, torso, scalp, or chin.

Causes: Excessively dry skin, and, less likely, food sensitivities or allergies.

Treatment: Lubricate the skin with a cream or ointment. Dressing your baby in light, loose clothing may be helpful too. If the condition doesn't improve or if the patches crust, ooze, or weep, call your pediatrician.