

Rashes & dry skin

It's normal for babies to develop skin rashes from as early as a few days old, as their sensitive skin adapts to a different environment. Most rashes are harmless and go away on their own. However, if your baby has developed a rash and seems unwell, has a high temperature, or if you're worried they're getting worse, see your GP or GP out-of-hours service. It's especially important to be aware of the warning signs of meningitis.



Meningitis warning signs

It's important to be aware of the warning signs of meningitis in your baby, which include:

- Becoming floppy and unresponsive, or stiff with jerky movements
- Becoming irritable and not wanting to be held
- Unusual crying
- Vomiting and refusing feeds
- Pale and blotchy skin
- Loss of appetite
- Staring expression
- Very sleepy with a reluctance to wake up
- A purple-red spotty rash (see picture)
- Some babies will develop a swelling in the soft part of their head (fontanelle).



Trust your instincts. If you think your baby has meningitis, see your GP immediately or go to your nearest hospital A&E.

This guide may give you a better idea of the cause of the rash, but don't use it to diagnose your baby's condition by yourself. Always see a GP for a proper diagnosis.

Milia

About half of all newborns will develop small white spots, called milia, on their face. These are just blocked pores and usually clear within the first four weeks of life.

Erythema toxicum

Half of all newborns will develop a blotchy red skin reaction called erythema toxicum, usually at two or three days old. It is a normal newborn rash that won't bother your baby and will soon clear after a few days.

"Baby acne"

Pimples sometimes develop on a baby's cheeks and nose. These tend to get worse before clearing up completely after around six weeks.



Eczema

Eczema is a long-term condition that causes the skin to become itchy, red, dry and cracked. The most common form is atopic eczema, which mainly affects babies and children but can continue into adulthood. Atopic eczema usually occurs in areas with folds of skin, like behind the knees or on the front of the elbows.



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

Ringworm

Ringworm is a common fungal skin infection that causes a ring-like red rash almost anywhere on the body (the baby's scalp, feet and groin are common areas). It is usually easily treated using over-the-counter creams.

Prickly heat (heat rash)

A heat rash (prickly heat) may flare up if your baby starts to sweat, for example because they are dressed in too many clothes or the environment is hot and humid. It is a sign that your baby's sweat glands have become blocked. They may develop tiny red bumps or blisters on their skin, but these will soon clear.

Impetigo

Impetigo is a highly contagious bacterial infection of the surface layers of the skin, which causes sores and blisters. It is not usually serious but you can visit your GP for a prescription of antibiotics, which should clear the infection within 7-10 days.

Hives

Hives (also known as urticaria) is a raised, red itchy rash that appears on the skin. It happens when a trigger (like a food that your baby is allergic to) causes a protein called histamine to be released into their skin. The rash is usually short-lived and can be controlled with antihistamines. However, if your baby gets hives repeatedly, it's important to see your GP, as your baby may be allergic to something they are being fed frequently, like cow's milk.

Slapped cheek syndrome

Slapped cheek syndrome (also known as fifth disease) is a viral infection that is particularly common in children and babies. It typically causes a bright red rash on both cheeks and a fever. Most babies will not need treatment as slapped cheek syndrome is usually a mild condition that passes in a few days.

Erythema multiforme

Erythema multiforme is a skin reaction triggered by medication, an infection (usually the herpes simplex virus) or an illness. Red spots develop on the hands or feet before spreading across the body. Your baby will probably feel unwell and may have a fever, but you should be able to treat these symptoms with over-the-counter medicine. It may take two to six weeks before your baby feels better.



Hand, foot and mouth disease

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a common, mild viral illness that causes a rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. Your baby may feel unwell and have a fever. Treatment is usually not needed as the baby's immune system clears the virus and symptoms go away after about 7 to 10 days. If you're worried, see your GP.

Keratosis pilaris ("chicken skin")

Keratosis pilaris is a harmless condition where the skin becomes rough and bumpy, as if covered in permanent goose pimples. There's no cure for this skin complaint, but it shouldn't bother your baby.



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Choose the right care

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- Your baby has signs of milia
- Your baby has signs of erythema toxicum
- Your baby has signs of “baby acne”
- Your baby has signs of prickly heat (heat rash)
- Your baby has signs of slapped cheek syndrome (see GP if your baby has a high temperature)
- Your baby has signs of erythema multiforme
- Your baby has signs of hand, foot and mouth disease (see GP if your baby has a high temperature)
- Your baby has signs of keratosis pilaris



Choose your Pharmacist, health visitor or GP if...

- Your baby has a high temperature (fever) of 38°C (100.4°F) or above if they are less than three months old, or 39°C (102.2°F) or above if they are between three and six months old (call your GP or GP out-of-hours service)
- Your baby has signs of nappy rash (Pharmacy)
- Your baby has signs of ringworm (Pharmacy)
- Your baby has signs of hives (Pharmacy)
- Your baby has signs of eczema (GP)
- Your baby has signs of severe nappy rash (GP)
- Your baby has signs of impetigo (GP)



Call 999 A&E if...

- Your baby has a high temperature but their hands and feet feel cold
- Your baby has a bulging fontanelle (the soft spot at the top of a baby’s head)
- Your baby has a fit (seizure)
- Your baby turns blue, blotchy or very pale
- Your baby has a stiff neck
- Has breathing problems, like breathing fast or grunting while breathing, or they seem to be working harder than usual to breathe (for example, sucking in under the ribcage)
- Your baby has a spotty, purple-red rash anywhere on their body or any of the warning signs of meningitis (above)



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Choose the right care