

# Seborrheic Dermatitis

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## What is seborrheic dermatitis?

Seborrheic dermatitis is a common skin condition. It causes redness, scaling, or flaky patches in infants, teens and adults.

## What parts of the body are usually affected?

- Scalp (this is known as dandruff, or cradle cap in infants)
- Eyebrows
- Eyelids
- Ears
- Nose
- Skin fold areas (such as armpits or thighs)

## What causes seborrheic dermatitis?

The cause of seborrheic dermatitis is not known. Some believe that it is caused by an overgrowth of yeast. It is not related to what you eat and it is not contagious.

Stress and sickness often make seborrheic dermatitis symptoms worse, but they do not cause it. Symptoms can get better or worse for no reason.

## What are the symptoms of seborrheic dermatitis?

Symptoms include:

- Redness
- Itching
- Scaly patches on your skin that may look greasy or oily
- Scales or flakes on the head or in the hair
- Crusty yellow flakes on the eyelids or eyelashes

## What are the treatment options?

There is no cure for seborrheic dermatitis, but there are ways to keep it under control. Treatment options for seborrheic dermatitis depend on what part of the body is showing symptoms.

## Skin

Seborrheic dermatitis of the skin can usually be controlled by putting on steroid or antifungal creams to the skin (topical). These medicines help with the redness and itching of your child's skin. Check with your child's healthcare provider before giving your child any type of topical medicine. They will help you determine which treatment option would be best.

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### To Learn More

- Dermatology  
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



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### Scalp (dandruff)

Seborrheic dermatitis of the scalp (dandruff) can usually be controlled by washing your child's hair with medicated shampoos. Check with your child's healthcare provider before using any medicated shampoos. Examples include Head and Shoulders and Selsun Blue, but prescription shampoos may be recommended as well. It is important to lather these shampoos into your child's scalp, leave in for 3 to 5 minutes, and then rinse out.

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### Baby scalp (cradle cap)

Cradle cap usually goes away on its own within a few weeks to a few months. If it does not go away, you can try washing your child's hair with a baby shampoo or medicated shampoo and massaging with a baby brush or toothbrush to help remove the scale. Check with your child's health care provider before using any medicated shampoos.

You can also try massaging a small amount of petroleum jelly or mineral oil (NOT olive oil) onto your child's scalp and leaving it in for a few hours or overnight before washing it out.

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### Will it go away?

Seborrheic dermatitis often goes away in babies before their first birthday. However, in children, teens and adults, it does not go away by a certain age.

When seborrheic dermatitis is under control, you can slowly use the recommended medicine less and less. It may be possible to stop the medicines completely, but occasional use may still be needed.

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