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How to give baby's skin a helping hand

Manchester Evening News · 19 Oct 2021 · 17 · DR ZOE WILLIAMS This Morning's resident doctor

BABY skin is perfect, right? Not always. In fact, most of the time that fresh new skin has at least one problem, as most new parents will know.



One of those parents is ITV's This Morning doctor Zoe Williams, who had her first baby, Lisbon Lion, nearly four months ago. Soon after his birth, her baby broke out in spots, which his mum diagnosed as newborn acne. She says most babies grow out of newborn acne after a few months, and it doesn't scar the skin.

Here, Dr Williams outlines common skin problems, and advice on tackling them...

BABY ECZEMA

"Sometimes when babies are born, the barrier isn't working quite as effectively and they get eczema, so we want to support that barrier as much as possible by using emollients [moisturisers]."

If emollients don't work, or if the eczema's severe, then see your GP, stresses Dr Williams, who says babies with eczema might be prescribed mild, topical steroids.

"But as well as treating the skin, we have to think about preventing the eczema from getting worse," she says, "so that means avoiding anything that can irritate the skin, like things that are perfumed, or contain any cosmetics that might dry the skin. Keep the nappy area clean and dry, and look for wipes that are as pure as possible."

NAPPY RASH

Nappy rash, which looks like pink or red patches on a baby's bottom, or warm areas on darker skin, is often caused by a nappy rubbing or from prolonged contact with a damp or soiled nappy.

Dr Williams says parents should keep the nappy area clean and dry, and change nappies frequently if soiled or wet. Use pure and natural wipes, and a nappy rash cream.

She adds: "If it's quite severe, if the skin's blistering or your baby seems to be in a lot of discomfort, get it checked by a healthcare professional."

NEWBORN ACNE

"Newborn acne has the appearance of teenage acne, it's bright red and is very common. But mostly they grow out of it after a few months.

"Keep the area clean, but don't overwash it and, importantly, don't pick or squeeze the spots or use any acne treatments designed for older children or adults."

She says it's thought the acne occurs because glands in a baby's skin aren't fully mature, so they have an inflammatory reaction and the skin becomes red and spotty. Nothing more than a very light moisturiser or emollient should be used on it, she stresses.

RASHES

Understandably, many parents are terrified when their baby gets a rash, because their first thought is that it could be a sign of meningitis.

Dr Williams encourages every parent to make sure they know how to do the glass test. If a baby has a red or purply rash, push a glass over it. If the colour disappears – or 'blanches' – it's a reassuring sign. But if you apply pressure with the glass and the colour remains, that's non-blanching – you should get medical advice quickly.

Other rashes, that do blanch, may not be so concerning: "If the child is completely well, with no other symptoms except the rash, there are so many common rashes. Often it's a reaction to the child having a virus and it's the immune system causing the rash, it could be an allergy or skin irritation."

Dr Williams is helping to launch the WaterWipes ABC of baby skin water-wipes.com/uk/en/community/abc-baby-skin, which aims to provide practical advice on how to care for common baby skin conditions. It is not a diagnostic tool, and for any concerns, parents are advised to speak to their healthcare provider.