

## **Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template**

**Title:** How to Treat Seborrheic Dermatitis (Cradle Cap)

**Name:** Stacy Kern, MS4

### **Plain Language Summary:**

Seborrheic dermatitis is an inflammatory skin problem that mostly affects the face and scalp. Inflammatory means that there are a large number of our white blood cells involved in the skin disorder. It affects both babies and adults. When the scalp of a baby is affected, it is sometimes called “cradle cap.” Not all babies get cradle cap. Doctors and researchers don’t know why some babies get cradle cap and others don’t. The good news is that it’s common in babies and it usually goes away on its own. Sometimes it lasts only a few weeks, but it can last much longer. It is not painful so it does not hurt the baby. It can cause flaking of the scalp that looks like dandruff. It can also become greasy, itchy, or irritated and turn red. Some parents wonder what they can do to help their baby’s skin heal faster, but as of right now, there isn’t one medicine that works best.

Adults can be affected with this skin problem too, but it usually lasts a lot longer in adults. Some people will have this skin condition for many years. A medicine that is sometimes helpful is called a topical steroid. Topical means that the medicine is rubbed only onto the affected area of skin. You do not swallow this medicine. There are other topical medicines that do not have steroids in them that can also work to stop the itching and dry skin.

In 1999, there was an experiment done with adult patients who had this dry, itchy skin problem. In the experiment, the researchers wanted to test a new medicine. They believed that this new medicine would make the patients feel better. The new medicine was made with something called aloe vera, which is actually a plant. The researchers added some other ingredients to the aloe vera to make a thick lotion. Then the patients were separated into two groups. One group of patients used the lotion with the aloe vera in it. The other group of patients used a different lotion that did not have aloe vera in it. The patients were not allowed to know which kind of lotion they were using until the experiment was over.

What do you think the researchers found out at the end of the experiment? Well, they were right in believing that the new medicine would work because the patients who used the lotion with aloe vera in it noticed they felt so much better. Their skin wasn’t itchy or flaking anymore. Some of the patients were even healed completely. The patients who used the lotion without aloe vera did not get any better though. Some of the patients felt even worse. So this experiment helped show us that the aloe vera plant can actually be used as a medicine to help people with this dry, itchy skin problem. Did you know aloe vera is even safe enough to use on babies with dry skin? The aloe plant is actually a pretty neat plant because it’s used to treat a lot of other health problems too.

### **Additional Resources:**

[www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov) (Search skin conditions and there is a link to seborrheic dermatitis).

[www.uptodate.com](http://www.uptodate.com) (Search seborrheic dermatitis).

<http://www.parenting.com/health-guide/rashes/cradle-cap> (Parenting magazine website).

[http://scholar.google.com/scholar?as\\_q=seborrheic+dermatitis%2C+cradle+cap&num=10&btnG=Search+Scholar&as\\_epq=&as\\_oq=&as\\_eq=&as\\_occt=any&as\\_sauthors=&as\\_publication=&as\\_ylo=&as\\_yhi=&as\\_sdt=1.&as\\_sdtp=on&as\\_sdtf=&as\\_sds=24&hl=en](http://scholar.google.com/scholar?as_q=seborrheic+dermatitis%2C+cradle+cap&num=10&btnG=Search+Scholar&as_epq=&as_oq=&as_eq=&as_occt=any&as_sauthors=&as_publication=&as_ylo=&as_yhi=&as_sdt=1.&as_sdtp=on&as_sdtf=&as_sds=24&hl=en) (Google Scholar search with link to numerous articles about seborrheic dermatitis and cradle cap).

### **Key Words:**

Seborrheic dermatitis, aloe vera, cradle cap, infant rash, dandruff, scalp, skin disorder.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.