

Inflammatory conditions



Erythema (Toxicum) Neonatorum

Important Points

- Erythema neonatorum is a blotchy red rash
- It occurs in 50% of newborn babies who are otherwise completely well
- The cause is not known
- It is not an infection or something that is passed from the mother to the child before birth
- Treatment is not needed
- The rash usually settles completely within two weeks

What is it?

Erythema neonatorum is very common, occurring in up to 50% of healthy newborn babies. It appears as blotchy redness over most of the body that comes and goes. In more darkly coloured skin this may be purple or dark brown. The child is completely well and is not troubled by the rash.

It commences with patches 2-3 cm in width that may have a small central blister. The number of spots varies from one or two to hundreds. It is most commonly seen on the central body, particularly the chest. Other areas such as the face and upper arms and legs may also be involved.

The rash generally starts in the first few days of life and clears by the time the infant is two weeks of age. Occasionally it is present for up to four weeks. Rarely, it may appear again during the first six weeks.

What causes it?

The cause of erythema neonatorum is not known. It is not an allergic reaction to milk or medication transmitted from mother to the child. It is not an infection.

How can it be treated?

No treatment is needed. It is not associated with any other health problems and the child is completely well.

Further information

Your Maternal and Child Health nurse.

Your pharmacist.

Your family doctor.

A dermatologist.

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