

## Natural baby

Safe, effective remedies for common first-year ailments

### Scalp and skin irritations

**SYMPTOMS** Cradle cap: a harmless scaling on the scalp caused by skin secretions; eczema: red, itchy and scaly skin. Neither condition is contagious.

#### SUGGESTED REMEDIES

■ **Cradle cap:** Apply olive or castor oil to his scalp for a few hours (cover with a cotton hat or gauze). Gently shampoo, then remove scales using a soft toothbrush.

■ **Eczema:** Apply a chickweed ointment or compress, or add chickweed tea to the baby's bath water. Try calendula cream or a low-alcohol moisturizer such as Eucerin.

■ Also for eczema, eliminate milk, soy and nuts from your baby's diet and from yours if you're breastfeeding. Or switch to a partially hydrolyzed formula or to one containing omega-3 fatty acids.

■ Pregnant women with allergies can take probiotics—supplements that supply beneficial bacteria—in their last six weeks to help prevent allergies in their children. Natural-foods stores carry probiotics for infants; they can help prevent and treat eczema.

■ Oatmeal baths soothe inflamed skin.

**DO NOT USE** tea tree oil.

**WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN** If eczema becomes fiery red or skin develops pustules.

### Ear infections

**SYMPTOMS** Your child may rub or tug at his ear, act fussy, lose his appetite and run a fever.

#### SUGGESTED REMEDIES

■ Limit your baby's intake of sugar (it suppresses immunity), dairy, wheat and soy. If you're nursing, reduce or eliminate those foods from your diet. If you're not breastfeeding, switch to a partially hydrolyzed formula.

■ Limit pacifier use. Studies suggest doing this can significantly decrease ear-infection risk.

■ Cut a yellow onion in half, warm in a 250° F oven, wrap in cheesecloth and hold until cool against your baby's ear. The sulfur content fights germs and reduces swelling. You also can put two drops of garlic oil in the baby's ear three times a day.


■ If your baby needs antibiotics, give him probiotics too.

**DO NOT USE** echinacea, elderberry or other herbs.

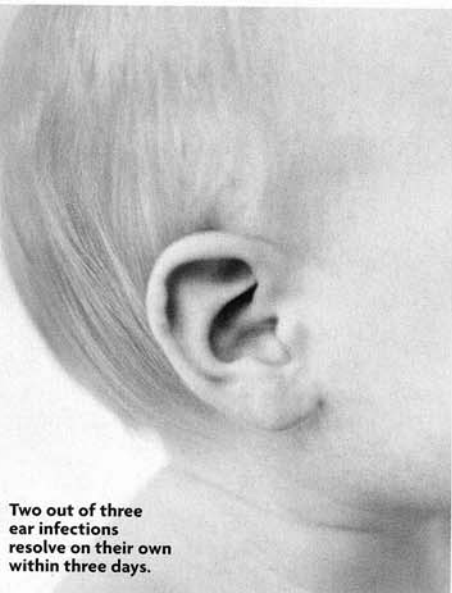
**WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN** If you don't see improvement after three days; if your baby doesn't "look right" or isn't behaving normally; if a baby under 3 months has a rectal temperature of 100.4° F or higher (3 to 6 months: over 101° F; 6 months or older: over 102° F).

By Julia Tolliver Maranan





Bottom line: Never use any "alternative" remedy that hasn't been proven safe.



Two out of three ear infections resolve on their own within three days.

## Diarrhea and constipation

**SYMPTOMS** Acute or chronic diarrhea: suddenly passing lots of watery stools (this kind is usually caused by infection) or passing smaller amounts of loose stools. Constipation: hard stools that are painful to pass or infrequent bowel movements.

### SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- Mild diarrhea: Eliminate juice; give plenty of water, chamomile tea, mashed bananas, plain yogurt or Pedialyte. Acute diarrhea: Switch from milk-based formula to a dairy-free type, such as soy. If you're breastfeeding, do not stop.
- Give a few ounces of half-strength prune, apple or pear juice a few times a day to infants under 6 months who are constipated; older babies can have more juice as well as fiber.
- Probiotics may help restore intestinal function in cases of diarrhea and constipation.

**DO NOT USE** the herb senna, anti-diarrheal medications, laxatives, suppositories or enemas.

**WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN** If diarrhea is accompanied by apparent cramping, abdominal pain, fever or bloody stools; if your baby shows signs of dehydration, such as infrequent urination, sunken eyes or doughy skin; if an infant hasn't had a bowel movement in two or three days, especially if he is being breastfed.

## Colds and croup

**SYMPTOMS** Colds: congestion, coughing or runny nose. Croup: an alarming "barking" cough that usually lasts three days. Both are caused by viruses, so antibiotics won't help. A fever under 100° F probably doesn't need to be treated if your child is behaving normally.

### SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- Use saline solution and a bulb syringe to reduce nasal congestion.
- Put one drop of eucalyptus oil in a vaporizer or add one drop to bath water. Or mix a drop with almond or vegetable oil and rub on your baby's chest or blanket (avoid contact with his face). Note: Eucalyptus oil is toxic if ingested.
- Slice and warm a yellow onion (see "Ear Infections," pg. 64) and apply to your baby's chest to relieve coughing.
- If coughing is "productive," mix ½ teaspoon powdered ginger with 1 teaspoon Vaseline, rub on baby's chest and cover with a T-shirt.

**Safety first** Though experts say that the remedies described here are safe for babies under 1 year old, if you have any questions or concerns, check with your pediatrician before trying any of them.

For a list of books and websites that provide authoritative information on natural baby-care remedies, go to [fitpregnancy.com/inthisissue](http://fitpregnancy.com/inthisissue).

■ Give lots of fluids, limit dairy and increase vitamin C sources. If you're breastfeeding, alter your own diet in the same way.

■ If your baby has croup, dress him warmly and take him outside; cool night air can break up phlegm, shrink inflamed membranes and calm coughing spasms.

■ Hold and soothe your child; this will help restore normal breathing patterns. **DO NOT USE** goldenseal or grapefruit seed extract.

**WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN** If a baby under 3 months old has a rectal temperature over 100.4° F; if your baby has trouble breathing and/or makes a high-pitched sound when he breathes. Make the call as you prepare to go to the nearest emergency room.

## Gas and "colic"

**SYMPTOMS** Gas is usually quickly (and audibly) passed. "Colic"—inconsolable crying for hours by an otherwise healthy infant—often is blamed on gas or other digestive distress, though this is controversial. The crying usually begins between 2 and 6 weeks of age and resolves when the baby is 3 to 5 months old.

### SUGGESTED REMEDIES

- Eliminate common allergens, such as milk, soy, wheat, corn, nuts and orange juice, from the baby's diet and from yours if you're nursing. Formula also may cause a problem, though some brands, such as Enfamil Nutramigen Lipil, contain ingredients designed to minimize symptoms.
- Give up to 4 ounces per day of room-temperature chamomile or fennel tea.
- Probiotics may help ease colic.
- Try giving Hyland's homeopathic Colic Tablets and Infants' Mylicon Drops; follow package directions.

**DO NOT USE** fennel tea for more than seven to 10 days; don't give oatmeal to infants under 4 months.

**WHEN TO CALL THE PEDIATRICIAN** If your baby's symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, fever or reduced appetite.

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**SOURCES:** Andrea Candee, a master herbalist in South Salem, N.Y., and co-author of *Gentle Healing for Baby and Child* (Pocket Books, 2003); Russell Greenfield, M.D., medical director of Carolinas Integrative Health in Charlotte, N.C., and co-author of *Healthy Child, Whole Child* (HarperCollins, 2002); Sanford Newmark, M.D., director of the Center for Pediatric Integrative Medicine in Tucson, Ariz.