

DANDRUFF

Dandruff is a common scalp condition caused by too much shedding of dead skin cells from the scalp. Dandruff is an embarrassing condition that affects many people. Having dandruff may cause a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. The good news is there are treatments and steps that can be taken to help prevent and control problem dandruff. Understanding what dandruff is and the factors that cause it are the first steps in self care treatment and prevention - talk to your pharmacist about which treatments are best for you.

What is dandruff?

A normal scalp skin sheds old cells in a cycle once every month. These old cells usually go unnoticed as there are very few of them at any one time. In dandruff the shedding of the dead skin cells from the scalp occurs at an excessive rate. The skin cells cycle every week, or even every three to four days.

Dandruff can happen at any age, but is more common from 12 years of age, peaking at 20 years of age. A form of dandruff known as cradle cap can occur in newborn babies and infants. Dandruff tends to be seasonal. It is most severe during winter and mildest during the summer.



Dandruff can cause either an overly dry scalp with small, round white to grey scales (flakes) on top of the head, which itch. Sometimes the flakes may appear yellow in colour and are waxy or greasy. Scales can occur anywhere on the scalp, in the hair, on the eyebrows, in the beard, and can spread to the neck and shoulders.

Dandruff is not dangerous, does not cause balding and is not contagious. Dandruff is a natural process and it can not be eliminated or cured. However dandruff can be effectively managed and controlled with the right treatment and self care.

Causes

Dandruff and the fungus theory

The exact cause of dandruff is unknown. However, today most skin specialists agree that dandruff is linked with the overgrowth of a tiny fungus present on the scalp called *Pityrosporum ovale*, *P. ovale* for short.

This fungus lives on our bodies and scalp all the time, usually without causing any problems. Unfortunately, for some people, it can increase in number, leading to dandruff.

Another possible cause may be overactive oil glands on the scalp which cause an increase of the natural skin shedding process. Clogged oil glands on the scalp are also another possible cause. These clogged pores can lead to over-drying and flaking of the skin.

It is thought that there may be other factors that cause dandruff. Some of these factors are:

- Hormonal changes
- Hereditary
- Bad hygienic habits
- Excessive perspiration
- Bad diet
- Excessive use of hairsprays and gels
- Too frequent hair-colouring or excessive use of electric curlers
- Cold weather and dry indoor heating
- Tight fitting hats and scarves
- Infrequent shampooing, the use of wrong conditioners or improper rinsing of the hair
- Long term stress, anxiety and tension
- Allergic or hypersensitivity.

Symptoms

Unightly flakes or scales are typically present on the scalp and trapped in the hair. Whether or not these flakes are 'oily' or 'dry' may hint to the underlying cause of the dandruff. The most common symptom of dandruff is scaling with occasional itching.

Treatment and prevention of dandruff

Dandruff can disappear suddenly without treatment or may take many weeks of treatment to improve. There are steps you can take to prevent and effectively treat dandruff.

Self care

- Prevention of dandruff may be achieved by shampooing on a daily basis with a mild, non-medicated shampoo.
- The scalp should be massaged gently to loosen flakes and the hair and scalp rinsed thoroughly.
- Stronger anti-dandruff shampoos and lotions are also available – talk to your pharmacist.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist



KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN
DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY

David S. Nolte, B.Pharm., M.P.S.
701 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON 3054
Tel. 9349 1522 - Fax 9349 1115



Sponsored by
DOUGLAS
PHARMACEUTICALS
AUSTRALIA LTD

*Pharmacy Self Care has a strong commitment to providing current and reliable health information.
The information in this card was current at time of printing.*

Important

Talk to a doctor if:

- Your scalp is red, itches, bleeds or burns or if any of these conditions migrate onto your face
- The flaking skin is isolated in one area or in multiple areas as the condition may be a skin problem other than dandruff.
- There are patches of hair loss.

- Since dandruff shampoos and products tend to be harsh, it is important to carefully follow label directions. Doing so will ensure the safest, most effective use of the product.
- Use shampoos containing tar if the hair starts becoming too dry.
- Talk to your pharmacist about shampoos which contain antifungal agents.
- Save your daily hair washing until after your exercise workout.
- Use a conditioner. Try a 'leave-in' conditioner; it acts as a moisturiser for your scalp.
- Try to avoid using hair gels and other products that contain alcohol, which tend to dry out the scalp.

Contact:

A doctor – listed under 'medical practitioners' in the yellow pages of the phone book

A Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

93-23449-000815

