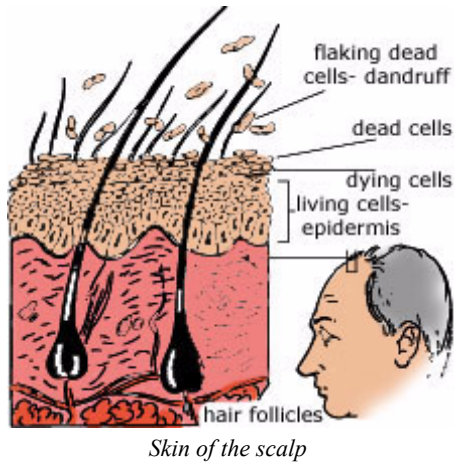


# Dandruff

## What is dandruff?

*Dandruff* is the excessive production of small flakes of dead skin on the scalp. It is a normal process, because the cells of the outer layer of scalp skin (the epidermis) die and are replaced constantly, like all other cells in the body. The dead cells then move to the outer edge of the skin and flake off after about 1 month.



## What does it mean?

Dandruff is a common, normal condition and carries no risk to health whatsoever. Everyone has it to some degree, and some people only notice it when they wear a dark suit, dress or collar. There is an old saying that 'nothing stops dandruff like a blue serge suit'. It is not contagious and does not cause baldness.

## What aggravates dandruff?

Dandruff seems to be made worse by a variety of factors such as emotional stress, poor diet, poor hygiene (including rarely washing or shampooing the hair), allergies, and various chemicals and cosmetics applied to the scalp. The skin inflammation called *seborrhoeic dermatitis* is considered to be a most important cause of dandruff.

## Does hormone imbalance cause dandruff?

This is thought to be a factor, because it runs a similar course to acne. It is rare under the age of 12, is most common in adolescence and worse around the age of 20.

## What about very severe dandruff?

In some people the dandruff is severe and persistent and itchy. Two causes of this are dermatitis of hair-bearing skin (*seborrhoeic dermatitis*) and *psoriasis*. There is usually evidence of these skin disorders on other parts of the body.

## What is the treatment?

There are many shampoos that are suitable for the treatment of dandruff, but no one particular shampoo suits everyone. The shampoo selected depends on the severity of the dandruff. The sulphide preparations upset some people because of staining of necklaces and after odour, but they are effective. If you find a shampoo that suits you, stick with it.

### Mild cases

Suitable shampoos are zinc pyrithione (e.g. Dan-Gard), selenium sulphide (e.g. Selsun) and mixed preparations (e.g. Ionil).

The shampoo is massaged into the scalp, left for 5 minutes, then rinsed thoroughly. Use it 2-3 times a week.

### Stubborn scaling and itching

This often is due to *seborrhoeic dermatitis* and *psoriasis*. Coal tar shampoos are effective for *psoriasis*. Examples are:

- Ionil T or Ionil T Plus shampoo, followed by Ionil rinse conditioner
- Sebitar shampoo, followed by SebiRinse conditioner

Nizoral shampoo is ideal for *seborrhoeic dermatitis*. The best way to use it is to start with a milder shampoo, rinse off, then use Nizoral, leave it for 4-5 minutes and then rinse off. Use it twice a week.

If itching is a problem, a cortisone scalp lotion such as Diprosone or Betnovate scalp application can be used.