

Psoriasis of the Scalp

In almost half of Psoriasis sufferers the scalp is affected. In some, the scalp is the worst or only site. In severe scalp psoriasis, hair thinning can occur, especially if it also itches. Psoriasis is not contagious or dangerous, but it is usually persistent and difficult to treat. There is no cure for scalp psoriasis. Treatment is temporarily effective, and may need to be continued for quite a while.

To remove thick crusts and scales, apply a scale removing medication to the scalp. If mild, rub the liquid into the scalp, wait 15-20 minutes, and then shampoo. If severe, leave on overnight with a shower cap. Choices include Baker's P&S Liquid, Epilyt lotion (both available without a prescription), Dovonex (the ointment is used mixed with an equal amount of Neutrogena conditioner), Tar ointments and DermasmootheFS oil.

If a thick tar ointment is prescribed (such as 5% crude tar and 5% salicylic acid in petrolatum) apply it under a warm, moist towel for 30 minutes before shampooing. You may have to use a little "Dawn" dish soap to get all of it out from your hair.

Next wash the scalp with a tar shampoo. If you have psoriasis of the scalp, it helps your scalp-where the problem is-to wash your hair daily. Tar shampoos may discolor white or grey hair, although the more refined tars (T/Gel, Pentrax gold, DHS) stain less. If you have light colored hair you use Head & Shoulders or Sebulex.

After shampooing, apply any prescription gel or lotion (Tazorac, cortisone type or Dovonex) using your fingertips just into the psoriasis. If instructed, also apply before bed. Sometimes you must take a break from your regimen for a few days because the psoriasis will become resistant to treatment. After pausing for several days, the psoriasis should again respond to treatment. A prescription of Dovonex ointment is sometimes given to be mixed with an equal amount of Neutrogena Conditioner. This is applied generously to the scaly at bedtime, and covered with a shower cap.

There are several oral prescription drugs for very stubborn or severe cases. Injections or Grenz rays into a few resistant spots may be helpful. Ultraviolet light treatments and moderate sunlight exposure of the scalp can often be helpful, so keep the hair cut as short as you can. Of course, avoid sunburning, since psoriasis may worsen after any injury.