

[◀ Back to Health A to Z](#)

Dandruff

Dandruff is a common skin condition. It's not harmful and you cannot catch it.



Dandruff causes white or grey flakes of skin to appear on the scalp and in the hair.

The flakes are often more noticeable in darker hair and if they fall from your scalp on to your shoulders.

Your scalp may also feel dry and itchy.

How to treat dandruff yourself

Use an anti-dandruff shampoo. There are several different types you can buy from pharmacies or supermarkets.

Look for shampoo containing one of these ingredients:

- salicylic acid
- selenium sulphide (or selenium sulfide)
- ketoconazole
- coal tar

Your pharmacist can tell you how to use the shampoo.

Use the shampoo for a month to see if your dandruff improves. You might need to try more than one type to find one that works for you.

See a GP if:

- you still have symptoms after using anti-dandruff shampoo for a month
- your dandruff is bad or your scalp is very itchy
- your scalp is red or swollen

The GP can check your scalp for skin conditions that could be causing your dandruff.

Causes of dandruff

Dandruff is not caused by poor hygiene, although it may be more obvious if you do not wash your hair regularly.

Stress and cold weather may also make dandruff worse.

A list of conditions that cause dandruff and the main symptoms

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Symptoms scaly, itchy and red patches on skin on the scalp, face and other areas of the body

Possible causes seborrheic dermatitis

Symptoms red or silver rash on the scalp, sometimes with patchy hair loss

Possible causes tinea capitis, known as [ringworm](#)

Symptoms dry, red, flaky and very itchy skin on areas of the body

Possible causes [eczema](#)

Symptoms red, inflamed (irritated) skin. You may also have blisters and cracked skin - reaction to products such as hair dye, sprays, gels or mousses

Possible causes contact dermatitis

Symptoms red, flaky, crusty and sore patches of skin covered with silvery scales

Possible causes [psoriasis](#)

Symptoms greasy, yellowish crusts on baby's scalp, eyebrows and nappy area

Possible causes [cradle cap](#)

Do not worry if you're not sure what is causing your dandruff. Follow the advice on this page and see a GP if things do not improve in a month.

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