



Supplemental Information about Dandruff

What is Dandruff?

Dandruff (Pityriasis capitis) is the excessive flaking of dead skin that forms on the scalp, often accompanied by itching, redness and irritation. As it is normal for skin cells to die and flake off, a small amount of flaking is normal and quite common. Some people, however, either chronically or as a result of certain triggers, experience an unusually large amount of flaking. Dandruff can also be a symptom of seborrheic dermatitis, psoriasis or a fungal infection.

Causes of Dandruff

The most common cause of dandruff is the fungus *Malassezia furfur* (previously known as *Pityrosporum ovale*). This fungus is found naturally on the skin surface of both healthy people and those with dandruff. The fungus feeds off of sebum, and is consequently found most on skin areas with many sebaceous glands: on the scalp, face and upper part of the body. When *Malassezia furfur* grows too rapidly, the natural renewal of cells is disturbed and dandruff appears with itching. Mild dandruff may be caused by overactive sebaceous glands, which are triggered by hormonal imbalance or stress.

Other causative factors include family history, food allergies, excessive perspiration, use of alkaline soaps and yeast infections. Even the season of the year can contribute to the problem. Cold, dry winters are notorious for bringing on dandruff or making it worse. Symptoms of dandruff can also be aggravated by exposure to dust, UV light, harsh shampoos and hair dyes.

Dandruff is a common, chronic scalp condition, which is marked by itching and flaking of the skin on your scalp. Dandruff can have several causes, including:

- **Dry skin:** Simple dry skin — the kind you get during winter when the air is cold and rooms are overheated — is the most common cause of itchy, flaking skin. Flakes from dry skin are generally smaller and less oily than those from other causes of dandruff.
- **Seborrheic dermatitis (Irritated, oily skin):** This condition, a frequent cause of dandruff, is marked by red, greasy skin covered with flaky white or yellow scales.
- **Psoriasis:** This skin disorder causes an accumulation of dead skin cells that form thick, silvery scales.
- **Not shampooing often enough:** If you don't regularly wash your hair, oils and skin cells from your scalp can build up, causing dandruff.
- **Contact dermatitis (sensitivity to haircare products):** Sometimes, sensitivities to certain haircare



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products or hair dyes can cause a red, itchy, scaling scalp. Shampooing too often or using too many styling products may also irritate your scalp, causing dandruff.

- A yeast-like fungus (malassezia): Malassezia lives on the scalps of most healthy adults without causing problems. But sometimes it grows out of control, feeding on the oils secreted by your hair follicles. This can irritate the skin on your scalp and cause more skin cells to grow. The extra skin cells die and fall off, clumping together with oil from your hair and scalp, making them appear white, flaky and visible in your hair or on your clothes. Exactly what causes an overgrowth of malassezia isn't known, although having too much oil on your scalp; changes in your hormones; stress; illness; neurological disorders, such as Parkinson's disease; a suppressed immune system; not shampooing often enough; and extra sensitivity to the malassezia fungus may contribute to the development of dandruff.

Treatment Options

You can treat flaking and dryness with over-the-counter medicated shampoos, like Selsun Blue®. There are several over-the-counter, non-prescription products available to treat dandruff. Dandruff shampoos are classified according to the medication they contain:

- Selenium sulfide shampoos (such as Selsun Blue® Medicated, Normal to Oily and Moisturizing formulas) help slow the production of skin cells and act as a peeling agent, softening and shedding the outermost layer of skin to help reduce flaking. This ingredient helps relieve symptoms associated with dandruff and seborrheic dermatitis.
- Pyrithione zinc shampoos (such as Selsun Blue® Itchy Dry Scalp): This ingredient treats and prevents itching, flaking and scaling of the scalp. It works by slowing the over production of skin cells, which helps reduce flakiness associated with dandruff and seborrheic dermatitis.
- Salicylic acid shampoos (such as Selsun Blue® Naturals Itchy Dry Scalp, Selsun Blue® Naturals Island Breeze and Selsun Blue® Deep Cleansing Micro-Bead Scrub) are sometimes referred to as "scalp scrubs" because they help eliminate scale build-up. Salicylic-acid shampoos help relieve flaking and itching associated with dandruff, seborrheic dermatitis and psoriasis.

Successful Treatment

Try using one of these shampoos daily until your dandruff is controlled, then cut back to two or three times a week. If one type of shampoo works for a time and then seems to lose its effectiveness, try alternating between two types of dandruff shampoos. Be sure to leave the shampoo on for at least two to five minutes — this gives the ingredients time to work.



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If you've shampooed faithfully for several weeks and there's still a dusting of dandruff on your shoulders, talk to your doctor or dermatologist. You may need a prescription-strength shampoo or more aggressive treatment.

The Selsun Blue® family offers a wide variety of products to help control the scaling, flaking and itching of the scalp associated with dandruff and seborrheic dermatitis for all hair types and leave them healthy!