



MANAGING SCALP PSORIASIS





TREATMENTS FOR SCALP PSORIASIS

Scalp Psoriasis

Psoriasis affecting the scalp is very common; almost 80% of people with psoriasis will have scalp involvement at some point in their lives.

Some people have mild symptoms whilst others can experience severe scalp psoriasis which causes intense itching.

Symptoms can include:

- Dry scalp
- Flaking of the scalp
- Red scaly patches
- Persistent itch which can lead to bleeding, if scratched
- A burning sensation or soreness
- Temporary hair loss

Unfortunately there is no cure for scalp psoriasis yet, but there are a number of topical over-the-counter and prescribed preparations that can help to relieve symptoms. If thick scale is present, prescribed treatments may not be able to penetrate through, to reach the scalp. Therefore, removing the scale before applying prescribed treatments will increase their effectiveness.



STEP 1 SOFTEN THE SCALE

Soften the scale to gently remove it. This can be done with coconut oil, olive oil, or almond oil. You may wish to warm the oil slightly before applying to the scalp, then wrap your hair in a towel or shower cap. For best results, leave oil on the scalp overnight.

Alternatively, your doctor or nurse may recommend a medicated ointment, such as a topical tar preparation.

Topical tar preparation such as Cociois® can be effective at softening and removing scale, and is available from your pharmacist without prescription.

Usually, the tar is left in contact with the scalp for approximately one hour and then washed out with normal shampoo. Follow the instruction of your healthcare provider. Tar may stain clothes and jewellery. Care should be taken to protect or remove these before application. Cociois® should be used daily initially and then according to need.



STEP 2 GENTLY REMOVE SCALE

It can be useful to have someone to help you to remove the scale. If not, try to locate where the scale is with the tips of your fingers.

Separate the hair and place a plastic fine-toothed comb, flat against the scalp and slowly move the comb in an upward motion so that the teeth of the comb gently loosen the scale. Take care not to remove scales too forcefully as this can damage the skin and flare your psoriasis.



STEP 3 WASH HAIR

To remove the coconut/olive/almond oil, you may find it useful to apply shampoo before wetting your hair and massage in. Then use warm water to wash your hair and get rid of any loose scale.

Tar based shampoos are useful for treating the scale that is present in scalp psoriasis. To be effective, the lather should be left on the scalp for approximately 5 minutes to allow the active ingredients to work, and then rinsed off. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist can recommend a suitable shampoo.



STEP 4 APPLY PRESCRIBED TREATMENT

Topical steroids are often prescribed to settle psoriasis flares. These are absorbed better and are more effective when the thick scale is removed. Steroids have anti-inflammatory properties. Scalp preparations come as lotions, mousse, and gels. If applying lotions be careful not to let the steroid run onto the neck and forehead. Apply as directed by your doctor/nurse.

When applying scalp treatments, it can be useful to have someone to help you so that the treatment is applied to the scalp and not the hair. If your whole scalp is affected, part the hair into sections and gently massage treatment into affected areas. Wash hands after application of treatment.

The combination of tar preparation, prescribed topical steroid and medicated shampoo may help relieve the itch and calm a flare up when used as directed.

In order to maintain improvement, ongoing maintenance treatment is necessary as required.



MORE ABOUT PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is a very common, non-contagious, long-term inflammatory skin condition in which there is an increase in the rate at which skin cells are produced and shed from the skin.

It affects approximately 73,000 people in Ireland. The red, raised scaly patches of psoriasis can affect any part of the skin surface, but most commonly involve the elbows, knees, scalp and lower back.

Psoriasis is a condition that tends to run in families – both the immune system and genetics are important in its development.

Environmental factors can also play a role in those who are susceptible. In some cases, emotional stress, infection (such as a streptococcal throat infection), injury to the skin or certain medications can trigger the first episode of psoriasis or exacerbate it, while certain lifestyle factors (such as heavy drinking and smoking) may worsen it.

Getting a diagnosis is important. Most cases of psoriasis are diagnosed by GPs, who are usually best placed to give advice on how to manage and treat your condition; sometimes however referral to a dermatologist may be necessary.

Although there is no cure yet, treatments are available to manage the condition.

We hope you find this leaflet on managing scalp psoriasis helpful and informative. If you would like more information, visit our website

www.irishskin.ie or call our **free Helpline on (01) 486-6280**

Irish Skin Foundation

Charles Institute of Dermatology
University College Dublin
D04 V1W8
Ireland

t: 01-486-6280
e: info@irishskin.ie
w: www.irishskin.ie
Registered Charity Number: 20078706

