



The Permanente Medical Group, Inc.
DEPARTMENT OF DERMATOLOGY

SEBORRHEIC DERMATITIS (DANDRUFF)

Seborrheic dermatitis is a common, harmless, scaling rash that sometimes itches. Seborrheic dermatitis most often occurs the scalp (dandruff) but it may also occur on the face, behind the ears, and on the chest. Another name for seborrheic dermatitis is seborrhea.

What causes seborrheic dermatitis?

The cause remains unknown. Seborrheic dermatitis is NOT related to diet, is NOT contagious, and does NOT cause hairloss. Stress and any physical illness tend to worsen seborrheic dermatitis.

Seborrheic dermatitis may appear at any age, either gradually or suddenly. It tends to run in families. Seborrheic dermatitis may last for many years and may disappear by itself. Often it gets better or worse without any apparent reason.

How can I treat it?

Seborrhea can be controlled, but not cured. The treatment depends on where the seborrhea is and how severe it is.

➤ **Dandruff:**

- The key to fighting dandruff is removing the flakes as fast as they form by washing your hair every day with medicated shampoos (such as Nizoral-AD, DHS-Zinc, Head & Shoulders, Selsun Blue, Neutrogena's T-Gel, and Neutrogena's T-Sal).
- Medicated shampoos are used in a special way: lather the hair, wait 3 minutes, then rinse thoroughly.
- Once the dandruff improves, you can use the medicated shampoo once or twice a week and use a regular nonmedicated shampoo on the other days.
- Sometimes you may find that a shampoo you have used for years no longer is working. If this happens, try shifting to another brand containing a different active ingredient.
- If dandruff shampoos alone do not work, use hydrocortisone 1% lotion on the scalp once or twice a day. You may buy this over the counter, either generic or brand names such as Scalpicin or Neutrogena's T-scalp are effective.

➤ **Therapy for the face and body:**

- Cortisone-containing creams or lotions applied once or twice a day are effective. Improvement is usually seen within 1 week.
- When the rash clears, use the cortisone-containing cream or lotion once a day or every-other-day for another week, then stop.

<p>Remember: It is very common for the rash to come back after treatment; when the rash comes back, start using the treatment again.</p>
