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University Health Board

Scalp Psoriasis Treatment Dermatology

Scalp psoriasis treatment

This leaflet has been written to help you understand some of the techniques you can use to treat your scalp psoriasis with prescribed treatments.

What is scalp psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a skin condition that can affect any part of the skin but commonly affects the scalp. It can range from mild with fine scaling to very severe, with thick adherent scaling covering the entire scalp.

Why is scalp psoriasis difficult to treat?

Scalp psoriasis can be more difficult to treat than psoriasis on the body because the hair can obstruct the area that needs treatment and can also trap the scale so it is less likely to rub off. The scale can therefore build up more quickly, causing a thicker plaque. It can be difficult to see the psoriasis on the scalp so it is more challenging to apply the treatment.

How to treat scalp psoriasis?

There are many treatments available for scalp psoriasis depending on the severity of disease. This leaflet explains how to treat thick adherent scale.

STEP 1:

Apply the coal tar preparation (e.g. Sebco, Coccois) to the scalp. Massage the product into the skin, section by section.

STEP 2:

Leave in overnight or if able up to 48 hours (particularly if the scale is very thick). The treatment is messy so use an old pillowcase or towel, alternatively the scalp can be occluded with a shower cap or cling film

STEP 3:

In the morning, wash out treatment with coal tar shampoo (e.g. Capasal, Alphosyl 2-in-1). You may need two washes to remove the grease.

STEP 4:

While the hair is still damp place a plastic, fine-toothed comb flat against the scalp and gently rotate it in a circular motion. This will loosen the scale which can then be lifted carefully off the scalp. You may find this easier if there is someone to help.

Do not remove scales too aggressively as this can damage the skin and cause hair loss.

STEP 5:

As there is now less scale on the scalp, the medicated treatment can penetrate where it needs to. You can apply a potent steroid lotion (such as Betnovate lotion) to the dry scalp and leave on (lotion is better than scalp application as it is water based and is less likely to irritate the skin).

Use the treatment for a couple of days until the scale diminishes and then use at regular intervals depending on how quickly your scalp psoriasis builds up (usually once a week or every two weeks). Applying coconut oil to the scalp a couple of times a week can also help.

**"This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**