

# Experts in Skin & Hair

## Managing Scalp Problems

### The Problem

Inflammation of the scalp can lead to the build up of scale that sticks together around the hairs. In dealing with the underlying condition it is important that the scale is softened and gently removed before applying the active treatment.

### Shampoos

Medicated shampoos contain a number of ingredients that are aimed at moisturising the scalp, softening the scale, or decreasing the presence of yeasts that lives on the skin, which can inflame it. Ingredients such as coal tar may be quite soothing and can help with itch. Shampoos are seldom sufficient on their own to manage the underlying problem, but are useful for maintenance in the longer term. It is important that they stay in contact with the scalp for at least 5 minutes.

### De-scaling treatments

In addition to shampoos there are a number of ways of removing the scale. Vegetable oils, such as olive oil and peanut oil, can be applied to the scalp and left on for a few hours, or overnight (use an old pillow case!) to soften the scale and hydrate the scalp. Moisturising ointments such as coconut ointment can also be applied in the same way.

Once the scale has been softened by the oil or ointment, the scale can be gently combed out using a wide toothed plastic comb, making sure to avoid any trauma to the underlying skin. Trauma can make some skin conditions, like psoriasis, worse.

### Active treatments

Once the scale has been removed, active treatments can be applied directly to the scalp. These are usually steroid based. Typically strong ones are needed for the scalp and fortunately the scalp is more resistant to the thinning effects of these steroids. They should still be used on an intermittent basis and not continuously.

Steroids for scalp use come in lotions, gels, mousses/foams and in a shampoo formulation, which are all designed to be easier to use, and more cosmetically acceptable in hair bearing areas.

### Removal of treatments

Any de-scaling treatments or active treatments left on the scalp will need to be removed. It is important to add a cheap shampoo to the areas of application and rub them in before getting the hair wet. Once this has been thoroughly massaged in, the hair can be wetted and you'll find it far easier to remove any grease.

### The Scalp Microbiome

Our skin and scalp are covered in bacteria, fungi, viruses and parasites which are collectively known as the microbiome. An imbalance of the microbiome can lead to overgrowth of pathogenic yeasts or bacteria that can lead to scale, itch or burning. Shampoos aimed at restoring the scalp microbiome may be beneficial.

