

## Patient Information Leaflet: Scalp Psoriasis

### What is Scalp Psoriasis?

Scalp psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune condition characterised by red, scaly patches of skin on the scalp. It can range from mild to severe and may appear as itchy, inflamed areas or plaques covered with silvery-white scales. Scalp psoriasis can occur on its own or in conjunction with psoriasis on other parts of the body. It can be associated with temporary or rarely permanent hair loss.

### Causes:

The exact cause of scalp psoriasis is not fully understood, but it is believed to involve a combination of genetic, immune, and environmental factors:

- **Genetics:** A family history of psoriasis can increase the risk of developing the condition.
- **Immune System:** An overactive immune response leads to rapid skin cell turnover, resulting in the buildup of scales.
- **Triggers:** Factors such as stress, skin injuries, infections (e.g., strep throat), cold weather, and certain medications can trigger or worsen symptoms.

### Symptoms:

Symptoms of scalp psoriasis may include:

- Red patches with thick, silvery scales on the scalp.
- Dry, flaky skin that may shed.
- Itching, burning, or soreness on the scalp.
- Hair loss in some cases due to scratching or irritation.
- Scales may extend beyond the hairline to the forehead, neck, or ears.

### Diagnosis:

Scalp psoriasis is typically diagnosed through a physical examination by a dermatologist. In some situations, a skin biopsy may be performed to confirm the diagnosis and rule out other skin conditions.

### Management and Treatment Options:

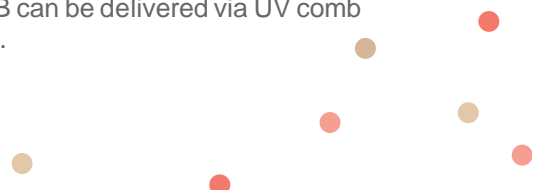
While there is no cure for scalp psoriasis, numerous treatment options are available to manage symptoms and reduce flare-ups.

#### 1. Topical Treatments:

- **Medicated Shampoos:** Shampoos containing coal tar, salicylic acid or urea can help reduce scaling and inflammation.
- **Topical Corticosteroids:** These anti-inflammatory lotions, gels or shampoos can be applied directly to the affected areas of the scalp to reduce redness and itching.
- **Combinations of Topical Corticosteroid and Vitamin D Analogues or Salicylic acid:** Additional ingredients like calcipotriol can slow down skin cell growth and reduce scaling, whilst salicylic acid can remove some of the excess skin cells.

#### 2. Phototherapy:

- **UVB Therapy:** Involves controlled exposure to ultraviolet B light, which can slow skin cell turnover and reduce plaques. UVB can be delivered via UV comb devices or 308nm Excimer laser or LED lamps.



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### 3. Systemic Treatments:

- For more severe cases, your dermatologist may recommend oral medications (like methotrexate or ciclosporin) or biologics that target specific pathways in the immune system. These are used when topical treatments are insufficient.

### 4. Lifestyle Modifications:

- **Regular Moisturisation:** Keeping the scalp well-hydrated can help alleviate dryness.
- **Gentle Hair Care:** Use mild, fragrance-free shampoos and avoid harsh products that can irritate the scalp.
- **Stress Management:** Techniques such as exercise, meditation, or yoga may help reduce flare-ups related to stress.

### Self-Care and Home Remedies:

- Keep the scalp clean and consider using a humidifier to maintain moisture in the air, especially in dry weather.
- Use urea based leave in lotions to help de-scale the scalp in conjunction with urea based or coal tar based shampoos.
- Consider coconut ointments or oils (arachis/peanut) left in overnight to soak in and hydrate the scalp.
- Avoid picking at or scratching the scalp, as this can worsen symptoms and lead to infections.
- Take lukewarm showers instead of hot ones to minimise irritation.

### When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If symptoms worsen or do not improve with over-the-counter treatments.
- If you experience significant itching, pain, or signs of infection (increased redness, swelling, discharge).
- If you have concerns about your treatment plan or need advice on alternative therapies.

### Conclusion:

Scalp psoriasis is a manageable condition, and effective treatments are available to alleviate symptoms and improve the quality of life. Collaborating closely with your healthcare provider is essential for developing a personalised treatment plan tailored to your needs.

For any questions or concerns about scalp psoriasis or its treatment options, please consult your dermatologist.

